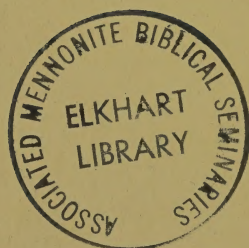
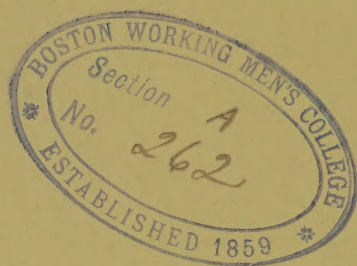
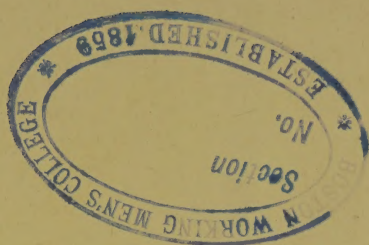


262
E 68

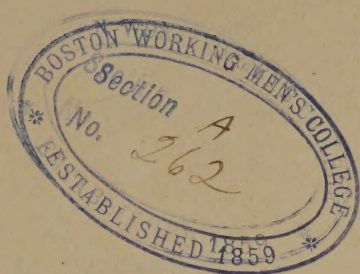




The
Mennonite Biblical
Seminary Library

The gift of

R. B. HESS



THE CHURCH, THE BODY, THE BRIDE.

ERRATUM.

Page 210: line 2.

For—“Theorems advanced upon isolated passages of Scripture can only be proved by the tenon which turns the mortise—*comparison.*”

Read—“Theorems advanced upon isolated passages of Scripture can only be proved by the key which turns the tenon into the mortise—*comparison.*”

THE CHURCH,

AS DISTINGUISHED FROM CHURCHES.

THE BODY,

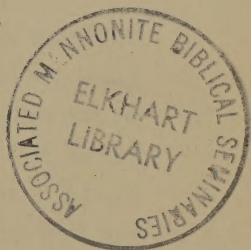
THE COMPLEMENT OF THE CHURCH IN GLORY.

THE BRIDE,

DOCTRINALLY AND DISPENSATIONALLY CONSIDERED.

BY

F. N. ERITH.



LONDON :

WOMEN'S PRINTING SOCIETY, LIMITED,

21B, GREAT COLLEGE STREET, WESTMINSTER.

1887.

PREFACE.

THIS book is the product of circumstances which call for explanation. The author disclaims any idea of raising controversy upon views herein advanced, and would repudiate, in presence of the most adverse criticism, all thoughts of reply.

Truth, in its issues, is sure to prevail. In ultimate results, it is never short of the triumph it seeks. It may take root slowly, and it often does, but it springs upwards with sure growth.

Discoverers of a latent principle of material importance in science, or ethics, or theology, may pass away in succession, before *bias* lends an ear to common sense, or *prejudice* yields to what it seeks to refute, but is powerless to disprove. There might be little to complain of in this, making every allowance for density of preconception in some, but it is the lack of *catholicity* of spirit that helps to a distortion of scripture and leads to persecution.

If B. is brought to believe, according to scripture proof which, *to him*, is infallible, what A.

34905

Sept 4-68

is not spiritually intelligent enough to accept, *because it is not to be found in the writings of C*, it soon becomes clear to the limited apprehension of A. that B. is *more than* mistaken. A, therefore, immediately invokes the *anathema* of his brethren to demand recantation. B. must prove compliant or await the worst! Is this religion? *Yes*. Is it christianity? *No*. This is not a supposititious case. Rightly studied, it goes to prove that the religion of a *sect* is, practically, the embodiment of the hollowest and the bitterest spirit a party can be possessed of. The man who is fearless to express his convictions, however unpopular, among the more prominent of his *confrères*, must expect nothing else than excision from a body who claim a privilege they deny to others—the right of prayerfully judging between that which is of God, and what is of *human* assumption in the things of God.

There is nothing more pestilent in temper than the Pharisaism of sects. It dominates the mind and will of the units of a whole, and would spread the seeds of cruelty broadcast if it only possessed the power. The evil is common to all sections of religionists. Those christians who arrogantly declare all classes of believers to be *sects*, and themselves *not a sect*, are the most liable to this sin; and, above others, are the most liberal in their denunciations and correspondingly bitter in

their animosities. There is a religious despotism which is simply mischievous and intolerable, that would bind one to accept any dogma without reference to its agreement with scripture upon compulsion of surrendering one's judgment to another apart from question. But at any risk of forfeiture of closest friendships, there is loyalty to God in honest hearts that cannot succumb to such imperiousness. Under the tongue of a nominal brotherhood is too often concealed the poison of asps, only let an *opinion*, because commonly received in its midst, be impugned by one of the fraternity.

In the Autumn, 1884, the author was ministering at——a town in the Midland Counties, when a brother in the faith of Jesus Christ, beloved and true, now with the Lord for ever, put into his hands a *brochure* entitled—"The Bride of the Lamb," by F. Brodie, Esq. A study of the tract presented truth to the heart and conviction of the reader with a freshness and vigour that led to the possession of a larger work—"The Revelation viewed by the light of Old Testament Scripture"—by the same Author. Finding both the pamphlet and the treatise, in the views expressed, were supported by the Word of God; and preconceived notions giving place to a sympathetic line of thought, the writer of the following pages was not long in announcing corresponding thoughts in

respect of prophetic bearings upon the subject the pamphlet more especially treated, and there-upon made a declaration of views he had long entertained respecting the Church of God. These thoughts for a lengthened period had been anxiously studied and prayerfully considered. But the avowal of them was as the lighted match that fires the train.

The warmth of unreasonable zealotry fanned the spirit of persecution, the embers of which still burn around the mis-called "*heretic*." Rashness sought to blacken a ministry it was impatient to stamp out, and which malice proved to be as impotent to assail. Through an experience of such cruel provocation, quietness and confidence best served the one who felt himself so mercilessly handled by the *savants* of the party, and as vulgarly defamed by the more illiterate of the *sect*. The author had almost counted it a *dies infaustus* when he was numbered among such unscrupulous spirits, but finding these missiles were flung indiscriminately against more chosen servants of God than himself—men as eminent for piety as for scholarship—it seemed more rational to live down such aspersions, and worship, according to conscience, with those whose consciences were in like exercise before God. *A little more gentleness had been rather more becoming.*

The MS. of this book has been advisedly

withholden from the press for over twelve months, but no longer seeing the need of keeping it from the printer, it is at length submitted to the public in humble prayer that God's own blessing may accompany the study of the subject among many. The months which have intervened since these pages were prepared for publication have only, after much prayer, and anxious biblical study, confirmed the author in the opinions he firmly upholds, however unpopular amongst christians with whom he grieves to be at issue.

That "*the bride of the lamb*" is Israel, and *not* the Church, and that *the Body is the complement of the Church* and *not* the Bride is as conclusive as Scripture makes any other of its many precious themes. Christians may not see eye to eye upon points in which principles of doctrine are not involved; but, surely, diversity of opinion ought not in result to end in ostracism of each other.

Not discerning the meaning of the Apostle, bigots misread 2nd Epistle of John; and, perverting scripture, through not being in the spirit of the word, indulge a hostile and bitter will. The love so earnestly insisted upon in 1. Cor. xiii., infused into *some* natures, would save fellow christians many a pang. The system of *boycotting* in Ireland has been described in a pamphlet by C. S. as somewhat akin to "*the mark of the beast*." (Rev. xiii.) Are Brethren about to estab-

lish a parallel to so cruel a device among themselves in their multiplied divisions? This is hardly "*wisdom.*" The Lord forbid the wickedness, and save them as a society of believers from such an unjustifiable wrong is the earnest, anxious and thoughtful prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

YEOVIL.

September, 1886.

INTRODUCTION.

HOWEVER much infidelity may sneer at the inspired word (*"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God"*); or rationalism with its specious theories may convulse society (*"The world by wisdom knew not God"*); the child of God, in truest simplicity, is happy in the assurance that *"The word of the Lord endureth for ever"* (I. Peter i. 25), and is confident that when the puerilities of carping criticism and the gain-sayings of captious unbelief shall have exhausted the blasphemies of wickedness, the Book of books will remain the standard of excellence—outliving the rage of the heathen and the vain imaginings of a people—incomparable, because God is its author, and exceeding precious, because Christ is its centre. The machinations and wiles of the enemy of God and man shall vanish before the revealed glory of the Almighty, *"and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God"* (Dan. ix. 11). The Bible lays bare the universal ruin of mankind consequent on the fall of Adam, summing up its terrible charge against the atheism of the world and its pantheistic absurdities with the imputation that *"the truth of*

God has been exchanged for a lie and the creature worshipped more than the Creator" (Rom. i. 25). Such a censure bears its own judgment.

God, in His word, deals prophetically as well as governmentally, with His people Israel, connectively with the ten lost tribes, while, in the history of the events of past ages is found, oftentimes, an outline of coming sorrows and joys in relation to their future as an earthly people, having reference, also, to the nations of the world.

The prophetic portion of the New Testament—The Apocalypse—is the unsealed book, opening with a promise of "*blessing to him that readeth and they that hear the words of its prophecy*" (Rev. i. 3), in which are predictions awaiting fulfilment presented to faith as an inspired drama, symbolizing the righteous ends of justice and judgment against sin-stricken Israel, and all unrighteousness of men, preparatory to the close of the present dispensation and the introduction of the millennial kingdom of Christ. The day is nearing that will end the interregnum—"the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24)—and commence the seventieth or remaining week of Daniel, when the chasm between the sixty-ninth and the yet unfulfilled week of years shall be determined, and Jerusalem no longer "*trodden down*" of the oppressor, "*the Lord shall be blessed out of Zion*" (Ps. cxxxv. 21); "*And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and*

all flesh shall see it together: the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah xl. 5).

THE WORLD

that lieth in wickedness, charged with impioussness and the rejection of "*the gospel of Christ—the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*" (Rom. i. 16),—is the subject of retributive justice and unsparing judgment. As certain that "*the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*" (Rom. i. 17), so certain is it that "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*" (*ibid.* 18). "*The Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity*" (Isaiah xxvi. 21): when "*the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondsman, and every free-man, shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, in that great day of the wrath of the Lamb*" (Rev. vi. 15-17). "*Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof*" (Isaiah xxiv. 1). "*The earth mourneth, and fadeth away, the world languisheth, and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the*

laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (*ibid.* 4, 5).

The whole chapter is descriptive of a period of scathing visitation from the violence of which there can be no escape, seeing that "*the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake*" (*ibid.* 18).

It is a time when "*the host of the high ones on high*" (*ibid.* 21)—"*angels which kept not their first estate*" (Jude 6), are involved with "*the kings of the earth*" and all unbelievers in a judgment so awful in character that, "*except those days are shortened no flesh can be saved*" (Matt. xxiv. 22). "*Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken*" (Eze. xxxix. 8). "*The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*" (Isaiah ii. 11).

THE JEWS,

whose history is destined to occupy the foreground of the end of the present dispensation and the millennial reign of righteousness which succeeds, as a people, remain to this day, a testimony, willing or unwilling, to the veracity of the scriptures of God, and are footprints along the course of time and the field of prophecy.

In just indignation of their impious rejection of the Lord, "*their house remains unto them desolate*" (Matt. xxiii. 38), according to the words of Him against whom "*their chief priests and elders took counsel to put Him to death* (*ibid.* xxvii. 1).

Yet, "*God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant—wondrous pledge of mercy awaiting them—according to the election of grace: and if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? since there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is God's covenant unto them, when He shall take away their sins*" (Rom. xi. 2, 5, 12, 26, 27).

"*The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the stranger shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. And it shall come to pass in that day, the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee,*

Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion " (Isaiah xiv. 1; xxvii. 6, 13; xli. 9, 10; lii. 7, 8).

The day hastens when these prophecies will have their literal accomplishment. How marvellous is the patience of God with Israel; and how marvellous will be the deliverance of Jacob out of "*a tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be*" (Matt. xxiv. 21): it is "*the tribulation*" of Rev. vii. 14, which precedes the rest and peace of the kingdom of righteousness—the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ as the true Solomon. Ephraim and Judah, in that day, shall be "*joined one to another into one stick and become in God's hand one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all*" (Eze. xxxvii. 16-22). Then shall it be that "*No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper;*

and every tongue that shall rise against them in judgment they shall condemn" (Isaiah liv. 17).

The heart that is moved by a retrospect of the ways of God portrayed in His word can only reiterate with solemn emphasis the inspired doxology—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. xi. 33).

THE CHURCH

"the mystery of God's will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world that it should be holy and without blame before Him in love, according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord—is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. i—iii).

There are many churches, and as many bodies of Christians as there are churches. But, in the scriptural sense, in the fellowship of the Spirit of God, there is but *one* church and *one* body. As yet, the church is incomplete. It has no *corporate* position on earth. From its inchoation with its complement—the Body—it has been *invisibly* growing up, seen and known of God, and is being fitly framed together according to infinite purpose

in Christ. As the members of Christ press onwards to glory and blessing in Him, and are passing away, while He carries, to be *with* Him in paradise, so the Body, which is the sequence of the Church, increases to completion, hereafter to be the display of God's purpose *in* the corporate Christ according to the counsel of His own will. The Church consists of faithful disciples of Christ Jesus from among all congregations or assemblies of believers "*to the praise of the glory of God's grace wherein He hath made them accepted in the Beloved: in whom they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Eph. i. 6). It is *hidden* among the various sections of denominationalism.

The Body, according to scriptural signification, is not "*a shadow of things to come*"—but is "*the Christ*" (Col. ii. 17), *i.e.*, the *corporate* Christ (i. Cor. xii. 12): not an allegory, but an essential—completed, compacted—whole. It is of first importance always to distinguish between the *personal* Christ—"the only begotten Son of God" (i. John iv. 9)—and the *corporate* Christ, an aggregation of redeemed saints—the Body united to Himself as Head—"an habitation of God, through the Spirit," and therefore in union with God, and manifested in glory in distinctiveness and purity with Christ its Head. The glory which God gave Him, by Him is given to them, and He

and they are *one* as Himself and the Father are *one*. This glory given of God to Christ (John xvii. 22) is fully shared by the Body: but there is a glory given to the Lord (*ibid.* 24) of which not even the body can be the reflex. The Body in its *official* display of the glories of the Head, shares in the perfection and loveliness of that which pertains to it by transmission: but the members of the body as *children in the Father's house*—units illustrating the marvellous love of God towards each—are with Jesus where He is, and *behold* His glory which God gave Him before the foundation of the world. “*In all things HE must have the pre-eminence*” (Col. i. 18), “*whether of things on earth or things in heaven*” (*ibid.* 20).

When the Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints—Himself and them, the *corporate* Christ—the Head and body for ever united—*then*, the calling of the church will reveal the magnitude and beauty of that into which it has grown under the conserving power of His grace—a glorious testimony to the preciousness of the blood of Jesus that will have reconciled all things unto God, and restored all things in accordance with His counsel, and in harmony with the purposes that shall shine forth “*His eternal power and Godhead*” (Rom. i. 20).

The Church, owning none other lordship than Christ's, is God's heritage (*klērōn*. i. Peter v. 3).

Its members—not belonging to the world as mixed with the policies of time—“*buried with Christ in baptism, wherein also each is risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God*” (Col. ii. 12)—are “*dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God*” (ibid. iii. 3). These members of Christ, through the baptism of the Spirit, are to faith a *præmonstration* of the embodiment of God’s purposes, according to His counsel. Faith, alone, in reverent and obedient exercise before God, discerns why the church on earth was *hidden* instantly it failed in responsibility as the testimony of God committed to men. There has been no *corporate* church answering to the day of Pentecost, since “*all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need: and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord was adding daily such as were being saved*” (Acts ii. 44—47).

The church was then *visible*, and in the power and unity of the relationship of the Son *with* the Father. But this unity (*one accord*) was too supremely tentative, because of its heavenliness, to be characteristically maintained on earth for any length of time, and was speedily invaded through Satanic influence acting on the flesh.

Nevertheless, existing apart from external manifestation, individual members of Christ, "*made righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. v. 21) constitute the church *invisible*; and, in God's sight, "*as the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters*" (Numb. xxiv. 6). In its incorporeity, the church is in the wilderness, unseen and unknown of men: spiritually, "*it is in the heavenlies with Christ*" (*en tois épouraniois Christo*. (Eph. i: 3). The nominal churches are autocracies in which power is entrusted, according to circumstances, in pope, or bishop, or delegate, holding supremacy in such charge by virtue of place and *titular* position: but there is not a shadow of resemblance in either of these institutions to the primitive church of Acts ii., as formed in the energy of the Holy Spirit. Blessed be God, His purposes are never contingent. Satan's devices are no surprises to Him.

Man, in weakness, proved himself in this instance of responsibility, as in other tests, incompetent to hold the testimony; but men's failures can never avert the eternal purpose of God. Taking the church into the *secret* keeping of His power, His counsel is not darkened by human theories. The assembly or church was founded at the descent of the Holy Spirit *before*

the doctrine of making in Christ "*one new man*," through the gathering together of Jews and Gentiles, was unfolded: but sin had found entrance into this beauteous illustration of God's new creation, and the leaven wrecked it in infancy. God never repairs what man has spoiled. As the church, *doctrinally*, is based on the *fact* of man's ruin, it is graciously revealed to *faith*, by the Spirit, how precious it was set up at Jerusalem, and how soon it was lost to *sight* through human infirmity. It is proof of the long suffering grace of God that, after *sin* had done its part in upsetting the *manifested* thing, the divine principles of its construction were committed as a revelation from God to the Apostle Paul, and that, as inspired by the Spirit, he gives to faith a spiritual apprehension of its indestructible beauty in glory as Christ's body—too surpassingly grand for display as God's church on earth.

The leaven that worked in Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.), and then developed itself in the avarice of its members "*in the daily ministration*" (Acts vi.), and by its dislocated testimony at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11-13), to say little of the sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv.) which had been subversive of the doctrine of the "*one body*," had the body of Christ been ostensibly on earth, what community of interest, let it be asked, has since established the claim of any

section of christians to be distinctively called *the church* of God? The Holy Spirit being blasphemed by the rejectors of His might (Acts ii.) on the day of Pentecost, as well as the early development of sin within the pale of the infant church as presented to the Jew *first*, the blessing was proffered to the Gentiles with like results so far as responsibility is in question: and, then it is, that God gathers together, *in one*, out from among both Jews and Gentiles "*His elect, according to His foreknowledge*" (1. Peter i. 2), and the building of His church by the Lord Jesus Christ goes on continuously and invisibly, even as the Rock upon which it is built—Himself—is invisible and invincible.

Unity of the church, if such existed, would be absolute interpretation of what is implied in the lovely phrase—"*the unity of the Spirit*" (Eph. iv. 3): but where has there been since the primitive church, *before its failure*, any manifestation of such testimony? The church is the fructuation of "*the mystery of Christ*" (Eph. iii: 4).—"*God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory*" (1. Tim. iii. 16). It is revealed of the Spirit as the effect of the Lord's resurrection "*from among (ek) the dead*" (1. Peter i. 3), and "*chosen in Him before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. i. 4).

In the parable of the "*hidden treasure*" (Matt. xiii. 44), the Lord buys the field—the world—to possess the church. His estimate of that which is unrecognised by any was the cost of His own precious blood—"He loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25).

The next parable—"the pearl of great price" (Matt. xiii. 45, 46),—is the elaboration of the "*hidden treasure.*" "The body of heaven in clearness with its paved work of a sapphire stone" (Ex. xxiv. 10), is a striking emblem of the *mystic* body of Christ into which the *invisible* church is being wrought, "*an habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Eph. ii. 22). There, through eternity, it will be seen in lustrous purity radiating the transcendent glories of its Head, the one centre of the universe of glory. In official completeness as "*the Christ,*" it will be an everlasting testimony to "*the power of God, and the wisdom of God*" (I. Cor. i. 24) in the cross of Calvary.

The church which the Lord builded at Jerusalem had no human agency. It was raised in His power by the Spirit whom He sent from the Father, and who came to witness to the "*chief corner stone.*" It was Christ's own house, over which He was as a Son. But the testimony of an ascended Christ was soon despoiled of its beauty, and what for a comparative few days, really *did* constitute the church was stranded upon

the induction of *sin* in its midst. In his masterpiece of wickedness, however, Satan outwitted himself. "*The foundation of God standeth firm (stereos), having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord (to onoma Kurion) depart from iniquity*" (2 Tim. ii. 19). He knows His purged ones who "*through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter i: 2), are vessels unto "*honour,*" though surrounded by vessels to "*dishonour,*" and are "*sanctified and meet for the master's use*" (2 Tim. ii. 20, 21). The church is not the light of the world, and never has been. Christ only is that, as "*the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person*" (Heb. 1-3). He said, "*I am the light of the world*" (John viii. 12). "*While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light*" (ibid. xii. 36). "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. v. 16) is addressed to individuals; and, is as morally important now, as when the words fell from the gracious lips of the Lord. *It is personal witness for God.*

Through the addresses to the seven churches in Asia, interpreted according to their symbolical and historic bearings, is seen how the church in its primitive simplicity had ceased as a testimony

of God on earth : and that the churches raised upon the pristine model by the apostle Paul had failed even more so in responsibility, and had degenerated from the principles of polity involved in the doctrine he was inspired to teach as of God. In his second epistle to Timothy, we learn the evil which had set in, and sympathize in the sorrow which wrung the heart of "*Paul the aged*" when he beheld the ruin of that which, "*as a wise master-builder, he had builded, according to God*" (I. Cor. iii. 10). "*All in Asia were turned away from him*" (II. Tim. i. 15), and "*no man stood with him ; notwithstanding the Lord stood with him, and strengthened him*" (*ibid.* iv. 16, 17). When the apostle speaks of being a wise master-builder, he refers to uninspired agencies. He says, others build on the foundation which he has laid, which is Christ ; and he cautions how they build thereupon. "*When the day of Pentecost was fully come*" (Acts II. 1), Christ began to build *the Church* at Jerusalem upon Peter's confession that He was "*the Son of the living God*" (Matt. xvi. 16), and the framing it together was sealed "*in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*" (I. Cor. II. 4). Man failed in responsibility to God, in respect of this marvellous testimony to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul builded *churches* upon the same foundation—Christ, and after the model of Christ's building, he had previously been "*caught*

up into Paradise" (2. Cor. xii: 4) to receive his commission from the Lord for the work he was divinely empowered to undertake. What he welded together was *gold, silver, precious stones*, and what he builded was another test, in grace, of responsibility concerning testimony. Either trust was too precious for man to retain in its integrity. Regardless of apostolic warning, others builded *wood, hay, stubble*, upon the same foundation—Christ: but want of cohesion, because there was no affinity, wood with gold—hay with silver—stubble with precious stones, only developed the painful fact, that, the "*great house*" (2. Tim. ii. 20), *without testimony—without inspiration*—was neither Christ's building, nor the apostle's, upon the model of what was lost to man, but *hidden* of God. *Churches* are not *the church*. They are ostensible institutions—*human systems*. As touching preaching the gospel of the grace of God, they are jealous, so far, of the responsibility attaching to each: but, as respects *the testimony of God*, because of their divergence from the system doctrinally enforced in some of the Pauline epistles, they have it not, and the day will declare the failure. *The testimony is gone*; and no Church, so-called, or sect, or party, can claim to hold it. *Æsthetic masks and sensuous displays* are the sign-marks of churches; and, as seceders from each other, they seemingly become more distanced

from resemblance to the beauteous simplicity of the original. It is blessed to know that the church *invisible* can never be conterminous with churches—the puerile and visible organizations of men. The building together of saints for an habitation of God is the secret work of the Lord, by the Spirit, in *individual* souls. The aggregate of saints whose bodies, separately, or collectively considered, are “*the temple of the Spirit the Holy*” (1. Cor. iii: 16; vi: 19): and, in the sense of “*God dwelling in them*” (2. Cor. vi: 16), are “*His habitation*” on earth, constitute the portion of the church which Christ *continues* to build until the last member has been added to it. The church and the body are concurrent. The members of the church invisible on earth, moulded by surrounding circumstances, passing through trials and afflictions, animated “*by grace through faith, the gift of God*” (Eph. ii: 8), and energized by the Spirit’s power, are growing up, according to scripture, unto *an holy temple in the Lord*, complete in glory, *an habitation of God for ever*, Christ and His members—Head and Body, the display of His majesty as foreshadowed in that wondrous figure of it on the mount of transfiguration (Luke ix: 28-35). The doctrine of the Church is founded on its origin at Jerusalem. Doctrine, of necessity, is based upon fact; as, in truth, all theory must be. But men

are as little ready to accept the grand spiritual scheme which was committed to Paul as his gospel, or special line of teaching, as the haughty scribes and pharisees were to brave the stigma of connection with such a simple assembly of saints as were gathered by the Spirit to Jesus of Nazareth on the day of Pentecost.

"The preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery (Rom. xvi: 26), which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures (graphōn prophētikōn), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith," was specially committed to Paul, as *"his gospel,"* as *"the apostle of the Gentiles"* (ibid. xi: 13), *"to the intent that now might be made known to the principalities and the authorities (kai tais exousiais) in the heavenlies (epouraniois) through the church, the multifarious wisdom (polupoikilos sophia) of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph. iii. 10, 11), and the apostle's prayer *"unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"* to whom *"he bowed his knees,"* was, *"that he would grant saints"*—Jews and Gentiles—*"according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man"* (ibid. 14-16): and, concerning the church, of this they witness that, *"Christ having made peace through the blood of His cross"* (Col. i. 20), *"they both, through Him, by one*

Spirit, have access unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). Thus, believers in Christ, converted Jews and converted Gentiles, are made one, "*He having broken down the middle wall of partition, and having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, that He might in Himself cast the two into one new man (ina tous duo ktise en autō eis ena kainon anthrōpon), making peace*" (*ibid.* 14, 15.)

Resurrection testifies unto the preciousness of "*the preaching of the cross*"—Christ crucified—"*unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*" (1 Cor. i. 18, 23, 24).

The Lord's ascension to "*the right hand of God making intercession for the saints*" (Rom. viii. 34) not only signifies His inherent majesty and glory—"He was taken up, and a cloud received Him" (Acts i. 9)—but is fullest expression of expiation of sins on the cross, redemption by blood: and from the day of Pentecost has been, and remains to His coming (*parousia autou*) for His church, a period of individual witnessing in the power of the Spirit indwelling the saints of God.

As joint heirs with Christ, a solemn question awaits answer from exercised hearts, how far this witness has been, and is, maintained upon the basis of the Lord's own words "*that if two shall*

agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of His Father; and that where two or three are gathered together unto His name He is in their midst" (Matt. xviii. 19, 20).

It is the only characteristic illustration of the true church extant, and what to this day had remained but for its loss through *sin*. One is thankful for the grace wherewith God has sustained an open witness among an eclectic few of His saints to the church as *it ought to be* as an universal assembly: though one cannot but mourn that the bright ray of *undivided testimony*, exhibitive of *the unity of the Spirit*, has long been extinguished by the nebulæ of misty opinions unsupported by the word. When churches began to teach, there followed an intrusion upon the office of the Spirit which dominating men's consciences, and warping judgments, stood directly opposed to the principle of two or three gathered to the name of the Lord, and the indisputableness of His promise. The instant any so-called church usurps authority in place of the Spirit's power, true witness for Christ is seriously menaced. There are truths in the Bible which, if one would "*understand the fear of the Lord, and seek to find the knowledge of God, must be sought as silver, and sought for as hid treasures*" (Prov. ii: 4, 5); and the student is disloyal to God who shrinks to give expression to a reading of scripture differing

from dogmatic interpretation, lest he should heap upon himself the merciless invectives of narrow minded criticism. A scriptural rendering which only strives to make clearer a line of truth that has been too long obscured, possibly, more on the ground of partisanship than of intelligence, even though it be denounced as *heresy*, and *anathematized* by the *sectarist*, ought not to suffer extinction, as a principle, through lack of courage in its defence. The faithful student of the word of life is consciously assisted of God to understand the word; and, as a child of God and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he has no reason to fear a manful expression of views that are supported by scripture proof, and held in unfeigned submissive-ness to the unfoldings of the Spirit the Holy.

When the last soul shall have been added to the church *invisible*, the fitly framing together of the dispersed units being then completed, and all having been conserved of God, *then* will follow the manifested glory of the church as absorbed in the Body of the glory—"the Christ" (1. Cor. xii: 12), the Head and the members together making up what (Eph. iii: 4) is called "*the mystery of the Christ*" (*to mustērio tou Christou*). Then, the Lord "*presenting to Himself a glorious church—His body—perfect in purity, indissoluble in unity, 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy, and without blemish'*" (Eph. v: 27) "*complete in Him*"

(Col. ii: 10), "*perfected for ever*" (Heb. x: 14), shall His brethren—the *twelve tribes*—rejoicing in *their* salvation on the earth, glorying in "*the Holy ONE of Israel*," and—in their deliverance from themselves, and their oppressors, and Satan, wrought in the power of the cross—shout, "*This is our God: we have waited for Him*" (Isa. xxv: 9); and sing—"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxviii. 26), the burden of their great Hymn of Praise—Psalms cxiii.—cxviii. Then, "*coming to be glorified in His saints, the Lord will be admired in all them—the Gentiles—that believe in that day*" (2 Thess. i: 10); and, *then* will be appreciated with joy inestimable, the interchangeable expressions "*the church, which is His body*" (Eph. i: 23), *i.e.*, the body of the glory; and "*His body, which is the church*" (Col. i: 24), *i.e.*, the earthly witness of Christ's love. The phrase in Ephesians relates to the glorified condition of the church *in* Christ: that in Colossians refers to Christ in *each* of His militant members on earth. In the epistle to Ephesians—because of the position to which the church is exalted as the body of Christ, blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies *with* Him, *new creation*, glorified, according to God's counsel *in* Christ—responsibility is not even named. In Colossians—because the members of Christ are pilgrims on

the earth, passing through the wilderness, heavenward bound—*responsibility* is the very scope of the epistle. “Reconciliation in the body of Christ’s flesh through death, to present the Colossians unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight,” rests upon the responsibility of an “*if*”—“*if they continue in the faith.*” Saints on the earth “*holding the head,*” knowing that Christ is *in* them, “*the hope of glory,*” are not slow to understand what they are responsible for as members of “*the body,*” increasing *with* the increase of God,” and “*growing up unto an holy temple in the Lord, an habitation of God through the Spirit*”—“*not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*” (2 Cor. v: 1)—a precious figure of the gloriously wrought building of God’s own counsel and purposes in Christ, the second Man, the last Adam, the glory of “*the creation of God*” as well as “*the beginning*” (Rev. iii: 14).

It has been correctly stated that, in a certain sense, a man may be said to *dwell* in his body: so, in a sublimer sense, when saints now in *union* with Christ, through the Spirit, are united to Him in glory and, severally, the members are tempered together, according to divine purpose, expressive of the unity of Head and body—Christ and His glorified disciples—*then*, God, in eternal complacency, can *dwell* in that which delights His holy eye as the fulness of Himself—the magnificent

display of the power of the cross of His beloved Son.

Hence is discerned the distinctive teachings of Colossians and Ephesians, though *both* are concerned with the mystery of the church to be united in *one* body. The difference is between the possibility of the "*will*" working in a saint, if not watchful (Col. II: 16—23) in things pertaining to God; and a resurrected life, in the power of the Holy Spirit, from a "*a death of trespasses and sins*" (Eph. II: 1), "*blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ*" (*ibid.* I: 3). The beauteous outline of the church given in the Acts cannot be over estimated for the example set as well as the precious teaching conveyed. It is a study of profound moment. In its moral characteristics and design; in its unique and outward simplicity; in its grand and univocal principles; God's wondrous thought—the church—will endure when time is no more—the theme of exhaustless praises through the ages of ages.

"O God! the thought was Thine!
 (Thine only it could be)
 Fruit of the wisdom, love divine,
 Peculiar unto Thee:
 For, sure, no other mind,
 For thoughts so bold, so free,
 Greatness or strength, could ever find;
 Thine only it could be."

G. V. WIGRAM.

Predestinated unto an existence outside the course of ages, "*the fulness of Him that filleth all*

in all" (Eph. 1: 23), the Church, though *invisible* to sight, is evidence to *faith*, of the invincible power of the cross of the Redeemer, as an aggregate of saved sinners translated into "the Body"—a glorious company of "*called*" saints surrounding their blessed Head, exhibitve of the *unity* expressed in the beautiful parable of "*the one pearl of great price*," purchased at such infinite cost to Himself.

Exclusive of the few first days of the Pentecostal church, there is nothing, at any time, to be found answering to the oneness depicted in the history which narrates with exquisite simplicity and natural touch the "*one accord*," the *unity*, the joy, of Christ's members attracting "*the favour of all the people*" (Acts 11: 47). Such a body of christians, in these days, would excite an admiration that would only be exceeded, *influentially*, by the testimony. The Spirit of God has graphically preserved to us the lineaments of what was truly according to God—a lovely emblem of "*the unity of the Spirit*."

Alas! it was too soon dispersed by internecine rivalries. The outward oppressions of its enemies had never achieved against it what its wranglings have accomplished within. For an ideal conception of God's great thought, that model in Acts 11. cannot be too earnestly studied. The grand doctrines based on that fact—the church *once* visible—emphatically expose, and as forcibly and

practically declare, man's utter incompetency to preserve, integrally, such a trust reposed in him. It was too lofty in its moral claims as the conception of God for man to maintain in unsullied purity. It was another test, proving man to himself in godward responsibility; and, like preceding trials of flesh, it was failure. But all this, foreseen of God, has by Him been overruled for blessing in respect of His purposes concerning *the church*. When Paul, afterwards, raised churches upon the same foundation, strengthening them with precepts and principles inspired by the Holy Spirit, the injunction—"giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit"—was signally unheeded even when with pen, and voice, he sought to awake the "*sleepy*" upon the animated assurance that "*Christ should give them light*" (Eph. v: 14).

Over half a century back, there was a wondrous resuscitation of spiritual life among many of God's saints, in various parts of the world, upon the model of the *primitive* church, accompanied, in the power of the Spirit, with recovery of long lost truths, and a precious rendering of prophetic scripture which, interpreted *literally*, instead of *spiritualizing* away its obvious reference to Israel and the nations of the world, made clear and intelligible what, through misapplication to the church so-called, had been reduced to a chaos of

wild fancies. These scriptural principles are tenaciously, and justly, held by many thousands of christians to this day. But when "*Brethren*" became influential, and in scholarship they could hold their own against any adverse schools of thought, they asserted a power as strongly *ecclesiastical* as any rival sect with the further revelation that the spirit of *popedom* was not restricted to a particular community. So this coterie of Christians is more markedly divided than any of the denominations. In fact, from the point they started, they have grown in spiritual pride, and have correspondingly lost the simplicity which distinguished their earlier history. There is but *one* table, say they *all*; and *each* claiming that *their's* is that table, bitter animosity takes the place of charity towards each other. Their doctrine is indefeasible in respect of God, and Christ, and the Spirit; but the polemic hatred with which they pursue a soul that thinks for itself, and reasons within the covers of the Bible too, is a sad proof that, professing the spirit of the Master, they have not caught it, and have "*not so learned Christ*" (Eph. iv: 20). It is pleasant to leave such reminiscencies for other considerations in connection with the subject. One loves to think of the many thousands of God's children who, attached as they are to the bewildering systems of men, as believers in the

Lord Jesus Christ, are "*accepted in the beloved*" (Eph. i: 6), and are "*brought nigh by the blood of Christ*" (*ibid.* ii: 13); and, as members of the invisible, universal church of God are baptized of the Spirit into the body of Christ. Their not understanding where of God they are, and outwardly found in the place that is dishonouring to His purposes lessens, of course, the intensity of present spiritual enjoyment, through lack of knowledge of the absolute presence of the Lord in the midst of any two or three gathered together to His name.

Better teaching may shew such saints that "*if dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, ordinances which are all to perish with the using*" (Col. ii: 20-22) can have no place in the rigid, grand, simplicity of the manner of assembling and breaking of bread according to scripture. Such assemblies, however small, alone *illustrate* what the church of God, as an institution upon the earth, *ought* to be, but *is not*. The church was no after thought of God's. It was His own suggestion, before the world began; and, in the conservation of Almighty grace and power, it grows up unto an holy temple in the Lord. That temple is Christ's body. Man has raised superstructures on the foundation of Christ, and calls each what each is not—the Church. Christ's building, complete and perfect—the Body—will

only be manifested where He is. The appended verses slightly altered from the original are from the beautiful hymn already quoted on page 25.

“O God, with great delight
 “Thy wondrous thought we see,
 “Upon His throne, in glory bright,
 “His body there shall be.
 “Sealed with the Spirit true,
 “We glory *in* that love,
 “Thy wondrous thought it shall renew
 “Our souls WITH Christ above.”

G. V. WIGRAM.

“THE BRIDE

of the Lamb,” in connection with Israel, is a subject of profoundest interest.

“*Lamb of God*” is one of the titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, and involves the momentous theory of salvation by the shedding of His blood upon Calvary’s Cross.

In Gen. xxii. 8—Lamb—“*God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering*”—is the chosen figure of the Son of God whom the Baptist (John i: 29) heralded as “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,*” “*who verily was fore-ordained* (1 Peter i: 20) *before the foundation of the world;*” “*in whom is redemption through His blood,* (Eph. i: 7) *the forgiveness of sins.*” The distinction between *sin* and *sins* is material. Rebellion is the *sin* of the world. It is the parent of the *sins* of men—“*witchcraft, stubbornness,*

iniquity, and idolatry" (1 Sam. xv. 23). From its outbreak in Eden, it has persistently corroborated the painful declaration that—in an unrepentant state, in the natural condition—*the wickedness of man is as great in the earth now, as before the flood, "and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually"* (Gen. vi: 5).

In connection with the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ "*whom God hath set forth a mercy-seat (hilasterion) through faith in His blood*" (Rom. iii. 25), the lamb is the most precious and familiar of all the types expressive of perfection, innocence, and resignedness—"*like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth* (Acts viii: 32). The emblem of atoning death in the sacrifice of the morning and evening lamb, conveying the thought not only of acceptance of the people of God, but the assurance, also, of "*His dwelling among the children of Israel*" (Ex. xxix: 38-46), received its divine accomplishment on the Cross of Christ, "*the preaching of which is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved* (1. Cor. i: 18) *it is the power of God.*"

In the Book of "Revelation," the title "Lamb," is associated with *personal* strength, glory, power, riches, wisdom, honour, and blessing, as well as with accomplished redemption; and, with "*wrath*," in connection with "*the day of His* (the Lord's) *coming*," when "*He will be* (Mal. iii.: 5) *a swift*

witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Him."

Through, perhaps, insufficient study of this precious title, in its doctrinal and dispensational bearings, the significance of the sentence—"Bride of the Lamb," has become obscured in a maze of anti-scriptural assumptions. Not long since, at a conference of christians, in an address on "*Separation to God*," the startling assertion was made, in support of the thesis, that "God and believers are husband and wife." Such triteness, as irrational as irreverent, merits only the severest rebuke. At the same meeting, verses 19, 20 of Hosea ii.—"*And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord*"—were as thoughtlessly, if not ignorantly, quoted as confirmatory that "*the Bride of the Lamb*" is the Church!

If dispensational truth and the character and force of divine titles had been more thoughtfully studied, and the practice of "*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*" (I. Cor. ii: 13) preferred to "*private interpretation*" (2. Peter i.: 20) such

confusions surely had never been. Alas! they are more to be regretted for the errors stereotyped than ridiculed for the mistiness displayed. The mistake of reading Revelation according to the dogmatic teaching of this or that authority, however learned, or after a method that ignores little if any connection of the prophecy with Old Testament Scripture, has associated with it a variety of ideas absolutely foreign to the purport of the book, and amongst which "*the Bride of the Lamb*" as the Church of God stands conspicuous. Can it be said of the Church, as of the Jew, that God, "*for a small moment, has forsaken it;*" or that, "*in a little wrath, He hides His face from it for a moment?*"

Impossible. The Church is never so presented as a thing of God. If Isaiah liv. be read carefully through, can its language be accepted as referring to the prosperity of the Church, in the relationship of a wife, to the exclusion of Israel to whom the magnificent prophecy certainly relates? It is plain to common sense to whom reference is made. The alternation of a *literal* with a *symbolic* rendering of Revelation to suit particular fancies has led to a confusion which had been avoided if special passages had been simply interpreted by the light of scripture. Crotchets ought ever to be inadmissible in the things of God:—the persistency, however, with which the Church, by

some commentators, is held to be "*the bride of Christ*," without proof, is completely astounding. As occasion directs to a fuller investigation of this deeply solemn and interesting subject, attention will be drawn to points where in the main all, it would seem, cannot agree, though the text is as plain as infallible.

"*Lamb of God* is an appellation that is anticipative of the sufferings of Christ on the Cross as the *only* victim whose absolute perfections could reveal the righteousness of God in response thereto. It is the Anti-type of the God appointed sacrifices of the Pentateuch. Isaac's enquiry of Abraham—"Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Gen. xxii. 7)—is wholly answered "*through the offering* (Heb. x: 10) *of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" God had provided Himself "*a lamb without blemish, and without spot*" (1. Peter i: 19), "*while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world*" (Prov. viii: 26). The Cross of Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of the grand, eternal, thought of God. It embodied all His purposes of bringing glory unto Himself in the work of redemption and "*the restitution of all things*" (Acts iii: 21), notwithstanding Satan, and the powers of evil wielded by him. In the precious blood of the slain lamb is everlasting efficacy with God. Him—the Lamb of God—the

Christ of God, "*who knew not sin, God made to be sin*" (2. Cor. v: 21)—the "*sin offering*," "*the Lord's lot*" (Levit. xvi: 9). The Lamb of God—"bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii: 24):—wondrous figuration also of "*the scapegoat*" (Levit. xvi: 10; 22) "*bearing upon him all iniquities unto a land not inhabited*"—"sins and iniquities remembered no more" (Heb. x: 17).

The expression—"Lamb of God," is symbolically exquisite, as setting forth characteristics and qualities both internal and external—soul and spirit, walk and ways—which only the spotless purity of ONE—God's beloved Son—could demonstrate as an unblemished sacrifice for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

"*The Lamb*," so significantly prominent in the Revelation, in *personal* power and victory, symbolizes the strength of HIM, who—"having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that He might create in Himself of the twain one new man so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. ii: 15; 16). "*Himself having taken part of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Heb. ii: 14). Christ in resurrection glory, "*became the first fruits of them that sleep*" (1 Cor. xv: 20), having abolished death, and brought

o light life and incorruptibility" (*phōtisantos de zōēn kai aphtharsian* 2 Tim. i: 10). On the Cross, Christ crucified—God's lamb—"unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power and the wisdom of God,"—indisputably proves the accuracy of scripture, that, "*the weakness of God is stronger than men*" (1. Cor. i: 23, 24). In the heavens—in glory—the Lamb in personal strength, wisdom, and riches, is the eternal verification that "*the foolishness of God is wiser than men*" (*ibid*: 25). That precious title, once associated with suffering and rejection and sacrifice, through the vaulted arches of eternity, is to be magnified in choral songs and ascriptions of praise from "*ten thousand times ten thousand*" of happy beings, and "*thousands of thousands*" more, due to the attributes of Godhead in ONE who is "*worthy as their Lord and their God to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power*" (Rev. iv: 11). This title occurs with oft frequency in Revelation; and, in the majesty and the glory of its significance, the Lord will rejoice over Israel "*as the Bridegroom rejoiceth over the Bride*" (Isa. lxii: 5) when "*the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready*" (Rev. xix: 7). In answer to the enquiry, "*Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?*"—the Lord replied, "*Can the children of the*

*bridechamber (numphōn) fast while the bridegroom is with them?" * * * But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days" (Mark ii: 18-20). It will certainly not be contended that here the church is inferable. The question is surely apposite to the subject—if the church be "the bride of the Lamb," is it not even more than remarkable that the Lord never alluded to the establishment of such a relationship of it with Himself; and that upon Peter's confession of Him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," when He announced that "upon that rock He would build His church" (Matt. xvi: 16; 18), He affirmed not that it should be His bride? No-where is such a sequence recorded in scripture; and the very passages quoted in defence of such a reading militate against the supposition when compared with their contexts.*

The Bridegroom—the Lord Jesus Christ—came to His own, and His own received Him not" (John i: 11): and, on account of that rejection, the marriage stands deferred until He restores unto "*His wife*"—Israel—when she "*hath made herself ready*" (Rev. xix: 7) "*her vineyards*" which have been laid waste, because of her abominations, and "*gives unto her the valley of Achor (trouble) for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth*" (Hosea ii:

12-15). As the trouble which Achan brought upon Israel became sanctified in its lessons to the tribes under Joshua's command, and proved to be the harbinger of a new career of victory over their enemies, and the adversaries of God, so again their Messiah will lead His chosen people through the vale of tribulation into the everlasting plains of peace and rest; and "*the redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs*" (Isa. xxxv: 9; 10): "*and it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that they shall call Him—Ishi, my husband*" (Hosea 11: 16). But it is affirmed, though one fails to find a single scripture confirmatory of the supposition, that the Lord has *two* brides! *ex. gr.* "the Lord is represented as the husband of the Jewish Church who, at His second advent, will recall Israel, the wife whom He had repudiated and cast off for the sins of her youth, and take away her reproach, by again becoming her husband; thus making restored Israel *His earthly bride*, as He will make saints of the new Jerusalem *His heavenly one*."* The city of the heavenly Jerusalem, according to this theory, means the church. But the Word does not say so. Is the fallible to be preferred to the infallible? The *italics* are not in the quotation. They are employed to call attention to

* "Armageddon." Vol. 11: p. 487. A voluminous work in 4 Vols.

views which among *advanced* christians of differing churches are *generally* accepted. But nowhere in scripture is it stated that the Lord marries the church. The Church's millennial display is Head and Body—"the Christ" (1. Cor. XII; 12); *i.e.*, Christ and His saints united as *one*; and, "*they reign with Him, as having suffered for Him*" (2 Tim. II: 12). Another suggestion founded upon Psalm XLV. is, that "Israel is *the bride of the King*: and, the Church, "*the bride of the Lamb.*" But this is quite as untenable as the paragraph cited, because without scripture proof. The titles "King" and "Lamb" are *positional*—the King on earth, the Lamb in glory. The Lamb on the throne is distinguished as the centre of the majesty of the heavens and the joys of a restituted earth. The *Judaism* of the Word and the *Christianity* of the Word are clearly discriminated as *dispensations* of God; and their characteristics engrave upon the page of truth the lines of demarcation. To call, therefore, "*the body of the Lord,*" "*the bride of the Lamb*" is, to say the least, unscriptural.

The Bible is its own safest expositor, when read prayerfully and without the bias of theological fancies. Its subjects are so minutely dovetailed that every sentence to be scripturally rendered in the light of the Spirit of God—the Revealer: "*for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of*

God" (1 Cor. ii: 10)—must be taken in connexion with its context, while direct citations and allusions have to be as carefully distinguished.

The fact that "*the building* [body] *groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,*" and that "*the tabernacle of God,*" in Rev. xxi: 3, [the body of Christ] "*is with men,*" when the prophetic word—"I will dwell in the midst (Eze. xliii: 7.) of the children of Israel for ever"—is having its fulfilment in the Millenium, is sufficient refutation of the theory that the *body* and the *bride* are synonymes of each other. The error, against which exception is taken, is the insistance that the first eight verses of Rev. xxi. refer to the *eternal* state, but which a careful reading wholly disproves. The book, relatively considered, is a presentation of the winding up of God's dealings with His ancient people, and the nations of the earth. The risen Lord as Head of the church, *invisible*, makes it *one* with Himself as *His body of glory* in which God dwells by His Spirit: and the union of the *corporate* Christ with Israel on the earth is the marriage of hearts delineated in Eph. i: 10, when, "*in the dispensation of the fulness of times all things will be gathered together in one in Christ.*"

A plurality of wives is disavowed by the Lord (Mark x: 2-5). When "*the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away His wife? tempting Him. And He answered*

and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." The apostle Paul, with great spiritual force, uses marriage as an illustration of union of hearts with Christ, and the argument is irresistible in appositeness and beauty. Such union of sentiment exists *now* between the Lord in glory and His loving saints on earth. "*I have espoused you to one husband* (2. Cor. xi: 2), *that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*" is a scripture often advanced as indisputably supporting the theory that Christ marries the church. But the word "*virgin*"—*parthenos*—is, in Rev. xiv: 4, applied to the *male* sex. Is this without significance? Controversy is wide of the mark: but so important a circumstance could not be overlooked without emasculating truth. The context of the verses 1. Cor. xi: 2, and Rev. xiv: 4, applies to purity of walk and uncontamination of the doctrine of God. Hence the warning against "*subtilty of the serpent*" in the first quoted passage, and the application of the expression to "*the hundred and forty and four thousand redeemed from the earth,*" and declared to be free of the apostacy. Such is the simple force of the word "*virgin,*" as employed in the before cited scriptures.

We would ask, in humility and earnestness, are mere human conclusions, no matter by whom insisted upon, that will not bear investigation in the light of scripture, to be accepted against the diviner sense of the word of God? Is the teaching of the Spirit to be limited to individuals, however learned, when the contrary to such limitations is affirmed in scripture? The subject will again come more immediately under review in the course of the following pages. As the desire is only the elicitation of truth, blessing is very earnestly sought of God that author and readers may alone be impressed by the Spirit of truth as a Spirit of power.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH, THE BODY, AND THE BRIDE.

Divergent as may be the views of Christians upon the Church of God which is the body of Christ—" *the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. 1: 23)—the subject can only be understood upon the authority of the Word, diligent and prayerful research being brought to bear upon it. The acceptance of a theory, without investigation of the proposition, is simply as perfunctory as it must be profitless. Blind acquiescence in the opinions of another, however eminent, however learned, loses of the force of *individuality* in the study of scripture.

The knowledge of salvation by Christians, in no degree lessens the power of the application to themselves of the injunction of our Lord to the Jews: "*Search the Scriptures*" (John v: 39). The Bereans are a "*noble*" example, "*in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*" (Acts xvii: 11).

It is possible to overrate *human* understanding in self or in others. Allowed in oneself it leads to conceit. Unreasonably conceded to another, it

yields to an aggressiveness of intellect—nor more nor less—an exotic of popery—that gains sway over mind and intelligence to the extinction of moral growth and spiritual freedom. A slavishness that panders to bigotry ends in sectarianism. What is too narrow, characteristically, to admit of expansion, is too limited to be entertained as a general truth. Let there be “*an honest heart*” (Luke viii: 15), “*a single eye*” (Matt. vi: 22), and the Bible student, subject to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, if, occasionally, at variance with another, as to the import or rendering of a scripture, will not be left without unfailing testimony to the power of earnest prayer to “*sit at the feet of Jesus*” (Luke x: 39), and “*learn of Him*” (Matt. xi: 29). “*The Spirit of truth is come, and He will guide into all truth*” (John xvi: 13), and as “*no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God:*” and, “*we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God*” (I. Cor. ii: 11, 12). To those who listen, Scripture has an emphatic voice, and if it says: “*To the law and to the testimony*” (Isa. viii: 20), obedience must surrender any pre-conceived opinion to *that* test. Any difficulty over an interpretation of a passage spread out before God

while comparing scripture with scripture—
“spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. II: 13)—
 will duly disappear.

Truth will bear sifting. Axiomatically, any of its theses may be complex, but patient examination brings to light what may have passed unperceived. Unfeigned dependence upon the Spirit of God for guidance, and a filial acceptance of the word in the heart as God's own, are unfailing safeguards in the study of the Bible. “The faithful Christian is assisted of God to understand the scriptures as he is to walk as a Christian. The help and teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the written word, are not two rules of faith. The scriptures are the one sure rule, and the Holy Spirit He who works in the believer to enable Him to use that rule, and not merely as a rule but as the food and edification of his soul. And in this the contents of scripture are adapted to the progress the soul makes in divine things and its state in every respect. It is applied by the Holy Spirit to the conscience and heart of the humble Christian who owns his need of the grace of God, and looks for it according to his need. . . . If men go on presumptuously, without depending on the grace of God, they will err as to scripture, and as to everything else. *The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way*” (Psalm xxv: 9): or, as the Lord said, speaking of

His people: "*They shall be all taught of God*" (John vi: 45).*

"We must give up self in order to understand the Bible. We must have a heart and an eye for Christ, or Scripture becomes an unintelligible thing for our souls; whereas, when the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. Hence you may find a learned man completely at fault, though he may be a Christian—stopping short at the Epistles of John and the Revelation as being too deep for him to enter into; while, on the other hand, you may find a simple man who, if he cannot altogether understand these Scriptures or explain every portion of them correctly, at any rate he can enjoy them; they convey intelligible thoughts to his soul, and comfort, and guidance, and profit too. Even if it be about coming events, or Babylon and the beast, he finds there great principles of God that, even though they may be found in what is reputed the obscurest of all the books of Scripture, yet have a practical bearing to his soul. The reason is, Christ is before him, and Christ is the wisdom of God in every sense. It is not, of course, because he is ignorant that he can understand it, but in spite of his ignorance. Nor is it because a man is learned, that he is capable of entering into the thoughts of God.

* *Coll. Writings*. J. N. Darby. *Doctrinal*. Vol. vi. pp. 33; 34.

Whether ignorant or learned, there is but one way—the eye to see what concerns Christ. And where that is firmly fixed before the soul, I believe that Christ becomes the light of spiritual intelligence as He is the light of salvation. It is the Spirit of God that is the power of apprehending it; but *He* never gives that light except through Christ. Otherwise man has an object before him that is not Christ, and therefore cannot understand Scripture which reveals Christ. He is endeavouring to force the Scriptures to bear upon his own objects, whatever they may be, and thus Scripture is perverted. That is the real key to all mistakes of Scripture. Man takes his own thoughts to the Word of God, and builds up a system which has no divine foundation.”* “God shows that no amount of information, learning, or ingenuity—nay, that not even piety—will enable us to understand God, or His word. What will then? Christ only.”†

Expositions of the word when irrefutable, because in accordance with the Spirit of truth, are valuable aids to scripture studies and one blesses God, unfeignedly, for such helps. In the perusal, however, of uninspired treatises upon the books of the Bible, the principle—“*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1 Thess. v :

* “Notes on Daniel.” Chapter v. p. 89. W. Kelly.

† Lectures on Rev. Chap. v. p. 109. W. Kelly.

21)—is absolute. If it were not so, a sort of infallibility would soon attach to the teachings of learned men by the idol worshippers of the day. As it is, the evil grows apace amongst the more masculine of the weaker sex, and carries in its train the evils of harmful adulation.

If a man is to be "*thoroughly furnished*," it can only be by "*all scripture given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2. Tim. III: 16, 17).

The expression—"the true church"—is common to all the sects; but, as yet, there is no agreement between them as to what it really is. Romanists declare themselves to be it; and each of the innumerable sections of Protestants lays claim to the distinction. Assuredly, then, the supposed "*true church*" cannot be the same in fact as the *real* church doctrinally enforced in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Why is this? Because a sensuous thing too soon superseded a heavenly creation; and scriptural doctrine based upon scriptural fact became *ideally* confused through the different phases of opinion, and this at a very early period of the history of the church of God. Paul discerned the then impending ruin, and John lived to witness the ripening defections from primitive simplicity which Ignatius and, after him, the Fathers, *so-called*, and their successors,

sought to perpetuate, and have succeeded in perpetuating.

The counsel of the Almighty—His determinate will—is as irrevocable as His being is eternal. His purposes—the activities of His design—the historical outcome of His counsel—are the manifestations of His sovereignty and grace.

From the transgression in Eden and its consequent forfeiture; from the murder of Abel and the ever increasing lawlessnesses of mankind; from the deluge when God destroyed all flesh upon the earth; from His covenant with Noah, whom He saved, because he was “*righteous before Him in that generation*” (Gen. vii: 1); from the confusion of tongues at Babel, through the unrestrained imaginations of men, on to the present day: it is nothing but a painful history of the rise and progress of *sin*—disobedience—leading on to the reign of licentiousness and the arrogance of vain thoughts as instigated by Satan. Without God in the world, worthy only of death and of judgment to follow—whether of those in the ante-diluvian age, or of the generations which have succeeded—unregenerate man serves the creature rather than the Creator, and evidences how terribly reprobate are the affections of minds through alienation from God, so that pleasure is found in the wickedness such spirits are given up of Him to fulfil. Nevertheless, in the call of

Abram is spiritually discerned the preciousness of the prophecy that was coeval with the fall. However many gods men had made to themselves, of better understanding than they all, he would discern by the heavens above him, and created things around, that there existed a self-existent Being by whose power, and the fiat of that power, everything in the heavens, and on the earth was. As God became to Abram an object of worship and homage, he was not long without visible evidences that confirmed the faith which "*buildded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord*" (Gen. xii: 8). From the loins of this man proceeded a people of whom it may be said, before history had a chapter, God foreknew and predestinated "*to be a special people unto Himself*" (Deut. vii: 6)—"*a peculiar treasure*" (Ex. xix: 6). The patrician faith of this distinguished personage in God only, as the Creator and Preserver of all created things, and his marked obedience, save fewest omissions of self-abnegation, were rewarded with remarkable and increasing blessings. Passing over the biographies of Isaac and Jacob, there stands in the forefront of the canvass the wonderful incident how one of Abraham's generation—the third in succession from himself—became second only to the King of Egypt being ruler over all the land, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord—" *Know of a surety that thy seed shall be*

a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward they shall come out with great substance" (Gen. xv: 13, 14). Upon the occasion of the famine when dearth was in all lands, though there was corn in Egypt, Abraham's grandson—Jacob—and all the souls that were with him, three score and six—went down into the land of the stranger to be a stranger; and there to begin their history in the tents of Kedar, as if their beginning prefigured the end of their nationality, as a power, among peoples adverse to themselves. But He who foresaw Israel as a race, while as yet they were in the loins of their forefather, raises them a deliverer in the person of Moses: and, in a while, rescues the people from oppression and bondage whom He was bringing into covenant with Himself, according to His oath to His servant in respect of his lineal posterity—the Jews.

The covenant made with Abraham—"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii: 18)—had special reference to the true seed—Christ—in whom the Gentiles, through grace, have their blessing. "*When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem them that were under law*" (Gal. iv: 4, 5) that the same blessing

might flow freely out to the nations of the earth before the Jews are multiplied in their own land, and "*possess the gate of their enemies.*" This is God's covenant with Abraham touching Israel, in whom the multiplication of the seed is "*as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore*" (Gen. xxii: 17). Quite true, it is certain that neither type nor prophecy ever revealed the mystery of Christ and the Church, but "it was God's thought to give an inheritance to those who, by Adam's transgression, had lost their heritage, and to have a Son sitting with Him in the heavens as the ONE who would "*bring many sons to glory*" (Heb. ii: 10);* and God's judgment upon Satan, and His mercy upon the fallen—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. iii: 15)—teaches as much. The Cross significantly outlined what "*was given to believers in Christ Jesus before the world began*" (2. Tim. i: 9). The comprehensiveness of the prophetic pledge or promise that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head" loomed the power which will "*destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John iii: 8) *when he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*" (Rev. xx: 10). This, however, as

* G. V. Wigram.

some understand 2. Tim. 1: 9; 10, hardly partakes of the nature of a covenant. It should ever be remembered that Adam was not the depository of promise. In connection with the giving of the Church of God to Christ, before worlds began, and after the revelation of that truth, according to Paul's gospel, the preciousness of the scripture revelation, (Gen. III: 15) already quoted is incomparable. With such an adumbration as John III: 16—"God so loved the world"—the heart of every member of the body of Christ can presently sing of "*Mercy and judgment*" with an emphasis concordant with truest appreciation of dispensational truth. Thus is traced the unlimited grace and blessing which, through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, flowed out as fully to the Gentile as to the Jew. If His heel was bruised at the Cross, that amazing death was, and is, but the prelude to the approaching day when "*the dragon, that old serpent, the devil, and Satan, will be bound for a thousand years*" (Rev. xx: 2); and it fore-shadows the distant period, but as a day with God, when He will bruise the head of the serpent for ever and ever. Then his works will follow him into the eternity of "*the blackness of darkness*" (Jude 13), never more to taint any of the *all things* that shall then have been purged by the blood of Jesus Christ, "*through the offering of the body of Jesus*

once" (Heb. x: 10). The glory of that *restitution of all things* is best expressed in the adaptation of scripture language from Psalm LXIX: 4, which depicts so forcibly the sore amazement of our Lord when suffering *wrongfully* at the hands of men, and which will then, with intensified force, when "*He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father* (I. Cor. xv: 24), declare that "*He restores that which He took not away.*"

"*The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations*" (Psalm XXXIII: 11). Though His purposes may be suspended because of the agencies of *sin*, they ever prove themselves, notwithstanding, to be the consummation of His counsel. If dispensational truth is to be discerned, and principles involved in doctrine, based upon fact, are to be distinguished, a neat discrimination has to be drawn between Israel, and the Church; the Body, and the Bride; the World, and the Age; or a skein of inextricable shades of opinion in the study of the Bible, ends only in oppositions and wranglings. The single aim of expositors of God's precious Word should be to separate things which differ, however relatively they may be associated, as gathering round one centre—the Lord Jesus Christ—that truth may shine in its unobscured majesty. The Old Testament very largely announces what the New Testament records;

and, says a revered teacher, "throws infinite light upon what we have often only the fact of in the New."* To read either, proportionally, with the ways of God, both must be studied conjunctively with the reverence and godly fear due to Books of which God *alone* is the author.

While the gospels of Matthew and Luke present a dispensational aspect of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of our blessed Lord; and those of Mark and John unfold, dogmatically, the glorious aspects of His person in service on earth—"Son of God" (Mark 1: 1)—"*the Word with God*"—"the only begotten of the Father"—"*the Word made flesh*"—(John 1: 1; 14)—the Revelation evolves the official relationship of Jesus Christ to God as the Lamb in power (*arnion* not *amnos*) in respect of the subjection of His enemies; and, thereafter, of the government of Israel in the millennium. "*Lamb of God*" (*amnos tou Theou*) is a title not once used in the Apocalypse. It is always "*the Lamb*" (*arnion*), while John 1: 29, 36; Acts viii: 32; and 1. Peter 1: 19; are the only places in the New Testament where the title "*Lamb of God*"—the sacrificial victim—is found. "*The Lamb slain*," or that "*has been slain*," slaughtered in sacrifice (*to arnion to esphagmenon*), is a sentence of present and retrospective import. In the glory of the *person* of the Lamb

* Coll. Writings. J. N. Darby. Doct. Vol. ix. p. 441.

will be seen the marks of His vicarious sufferings for sin upon the cross. “*Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side*” (John xx: 27) is language beyond all suppository range of imaginings. The phrase—“*the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men*” (I. Cor. i: 25)—beautifully illustrates the precision of the Holy Spirit in the use of words in relation to place, circumstance, or times, that may best exhibit the absolute perfection of the ONE who “*humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross*” (Phil. ii: 8). He who declared the ignominy of His position—“*I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men and despised*” (Psalm xxii: 6)—and was contemptuously disowned of men, even though proclaimed by the Spirit of God as the “*beloved Son*” (Matt. iii: 17), and “*the Lamb of God*” (John i: 29); when “*all judgment is committed unto Him*” (*ibid.* v: 22) will “*consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy by the appearing of His coming*” (*te epiphānia tes parousias autou*) “*the lawless one*” (*ho anomos*). As sitting upon the throne of His Father, “*that same Jesus whom God hath made both Lord and Christ*” (Acts ii: 36) holds in derision, now, “*the kings of the earth, and the rulers that take counsel together, and the people that imagine a vain thing, and the heathen that rage, whom He will dash*

in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 11:); and, the day is at hand when the fear of such, under the display of His power, shall compel them to call to "*the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*" (Rev. vi: 16; 17). As the *Lamb of God*, He is the present and eternal pledge to those that have been, as to them which are brought to believe in Him, both Jew and Gentile, that "there is *no condemnation*," and "*no separation*" (Rom. viii: 1; 39); but, in a short time, principalities and powers shall render to Him as the "*Prince of the Kings of the earth*" (Rev. i: 6)—"*the Lamb*"—co-equal with "*the Lord God Almighty*" (*ibid.* xxi: 22)—the homage due to the excellency of the once despised and rejected Son of God.

When the Lord renounced, ministerially, all earthly connection with Israel for the present, He would recognize none other tie than that formed by God's word, and which could be exemplified only by doing "*the will of the Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. xii: 50). Before considering what the Church is, according to Scripture, it may not be out of place to glance at "*the kingdom of heaven*" what it is. "The phrase"—remarks Dean Alford—"signifies neither the Church nor the Christian religion, but strictly the kingdom of the Messiah which is to be revealed hereafter."

In a limited sense, this is true enough ; but one is tempted to enquire, as bearing upon the subject under review, what "*christian religion*" means ? Certainly, it breathes not the spirit of *Christianity*. The word, "religion," is as applicable to the tenets of Mohammed, whose sword the fanatic declared to be "*the key of Heaven and Hell*," as to the interdictions of the syllabus, and the infallibility of the Pope of Rome, with the sequel of monstrous assumptions over the rights of conscience ; or, for that matter, of the manifold sections of Protestantism ! Religion, rightly defined, is simply a demarcation between partisans of rival systems, and is diametrically opposed to the "*wisdom*" of Christianity "*which is from above and is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*" (James, III : 17). Christ is the author and foundation of christianity. It is not difficult to discover wherein it differs from the "*wisdom*" of religion which "*descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*," full of "*envying and strife, confusion and every evil work*" (*ibid.* 15 ; 16). Satan is the author and foundation of religion. Under its cloak, the blackest deeds history records have been perpetrated ; and beneath its mantle, with shame be it spoken, many of the cruelest slanders are readily circulated. Men of the world, not a few of them, without a spark of *christianity*, are

ready to draw the sword in defence of "*religion*" and feeble devotees of the principle are as eager to champion it with a less valiant but more deadly weapon—the *tongue*!

In the succeeding chapter, "*the kingdom of heaven*" will occupy special consideration.

CHAPTER II.

The Lord in those precious beatitudes which preface the sermon on the Mount (Matt. v—vii), distinguishes the virtues of character that would be suitable to the kingdom He afterwards unfolds in parables (*ibid.* xiii), of deepest significance. Having besought souls, as it were, to shine in the sphere into which He conducted; and having unveiled His own work as preparative to their occupancy of the place of His rejection, He images what the kingdom of heaven on earth really is, as the scene where His authority is, at least, nominally owned. It exists not in outward display, and cannot, until Israel shall say—"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Psalm cxviii: 26). It is therefore, now, only apprehended in *mystic* form; and it is of first importance to discern this. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. v: 3); that is, the Lord describes what the requisites should be of those who find entrance

into it, without reference to Heaven, as simply bearing on a scene upon earth over which, as the prophet expresses it, "*the heavens rule*" (Dan. iv : 26). There should be no confounding of the Church and the Kingdom. They are very distinct. The Church is *in* the kingdom but never *of* it, as will be seen further on. The kingdom of heaven has believers in it, but in it is found bad people also. The tares and the wheat grow together. In the parables (Matt. XIII : 1—36), the first applies to the Lord who announces Himself as "*a sower going forth to sow*," that is, commencing a work to which the world was a stranger before. It is the word of the kingdom rather than the gospel of grace, while the application of its moral force is as stringent as ever upon exercised hearts. Deeper acquaintance with the Lord's ministry only makes the study of it more precious. So it is with this wonderful chapter in which is given His incomparable method of teaching. He sows the seed, but there were destructive agencies at hand to devour what was sown : or the ground itself, wanting depth of earth, gave none opportunity for the grain to strike its roots downwards, ere springing upwards, and therefore speedily withered : or the seed fell among thorns and was choked : so that one effort only proved productive, and even that, variable in results, yielding differently—"an hundred-fold, sixty-fold,

thirty-fold." Then follow three similitudes of the kingdom of heaven in which is found a quantum of evil with a certain amount of good, both which proportions "*grow together until the harvest.*" But in the last of the first four parables, "*leaven*" so permeates the whole lump that it is difficult to distinguish the pure meal of the word.

He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world, and at this present time is the sphere of the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. The children of the kingdom are the good seed: but false doctrine, heresies, schisms—the *tares*—are sown of the devil. The ministering spirits—the judicial agents of God's judgments who reap the harvest at the end of the age—are "*the angels who shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.*" In *v.v.* 39, 40, 49, the term world (*aionōs*)—age—having reference to duration of time—has not the same signification as the word *world* (*kosmos*) in *ver.* 38, which relates to the scheme of material things. Let it never be conceded that *sin* was an accident, and that redemption was a bare remedy to meet the dreadful exigence—"an enemy hath done this." Satan, the enemy of God, was permitted to accomplish his devices, but this wickedness only displayed what had not otherwise been known—the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God in the gift of His Son who, through

death and resurrection, "*spoiling principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*" (Col. 11: 15). The kingdom of heaven is the dispensation now current upon the earth, and holds within it wheat and tares. Tacitly it takes in the whole area of Christian profession. For a while, it is absorbed in the generic term—*Christendom*, in which is found a mass of unbelieving persons as well as a comparative aggregate of believers. "The first of the parables is no similitude of the kingdom at all, but the sowing of the seed, by which its ministration was carried into effect: a general parable, the general instrument, and therefore stated previously to the judicial blindness of the Jews, and not made a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, but the word of the kingdom, the details of the operation or hindrance of which are most blessedly and beautifully marked. The following six parables are similitudes of the kingdom of heaven, but there is a marked distinction in them. The explanation of the first of the six and the last three of these parables are addressed to the disciples alone; the former three being addressed to them and the multitude at large. The first three contain the ostensible position and result of the kingdom in the world, of which men might be more or less cognizant, or which might be addressed to them. The latter three, and their

explanation, are either the result in full development, the result in God's hands, or the intrinsic character and value of the kingdom work, as in the mind of the Spirit developing the mind of the Lord. This was addressed to the disciples especially. Farther, as the first three are the kingdom as seen in the world, and the last three as known in the mind of God, so is the contrast between them more definite still."* The kingdom of heaven may be looked at in two aspects: the one broad, and the other narrowed. The broad aspect of it in which both good and bad are presented in Matt. XIII: is mixed; and embraces both sections without distinction or difference. Unregenerate baptized persons, nominal professors, unfitted for heaven, are therein, as well as those which have been "*born anew*" and, through grace, are found "*steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*" (I. Cor. xv: 58). The kingdom of heaven was commenced by the preaching and baptism of John unto repentance—the *forsaking* of sins (Mark I: 4). "It was, as it were, a bridge, which from the baptism of the Jews made a way to that of the Saviour; it was superior to the first, but inferior to the second."† It was superseded by the manifestation of the Messiah, and the gift of the Holy

* Coll. Writings, J. N. Darby. *Prophetic*, Vol. I. pp. 90; 91.

† Chrysostom.

Spirit. But the Lord's entrance into the kingdom through this rite "*to fulfil all righteousness*" (Matt. III: 15), was divinest attestation to the ineffable grace of His wondrous mission from highest glory to the place of rejection. Outwardly He identified Himself with His people. He had nought to repent of but His gracious heart was with men in their repentance. *Profoundly beautiful!* While the Jews might regard John's baptism as symbolizing the approach of a kingdom to be set in visible sovereignty over the earth—the prophecies had encouraged as much; and absolutely it will be so; but in that "*the Light was in the world,*" . . . "*and the world knew Him not;*" and, "*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*" (John I: 10; 11); that rejection, and His finished work upon the cross, brought in the kingdom of heaven on earth in the *mystic* form it remains to this day.

In its broad presentation the kingdom prefigured *Christendom*; and, as entrusted to man, it has become all that the Lord foretold of it. The parable of the mustard seed typifies the christendom of present times in its deep apostacy from true *Christianity*. Like the condition of Sardis—Christendom "*has a name that it lives, but is dead*" (Rev. III: 1). "It is a common thing in Scripture to use the tree, either as the symbol of fruit-bearing or of a place of high dignity and

importance. In the New Testament the figure extended to that which for a season supersedes Israel. Matt. XIII. shows us that the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven is, in one of its phases, compared to a tree sprouting up from small beginnings. The Lord unfolds the history of professing Christendom. In Matt. XII. *He had given His sentence upon Israel.* The last state should be worse than the first. Such will be the state of the wicked generation of Israel, that put the Lord Jesus to death, before God judges it. Then the Lord turns to Christendom, and shows, first of all, His own work on earth. He sows seed. In the next parable an enemy appears upon the scene, intrudes into the field, and sows bad seed. It is the inroad of evil into the field of Christian profession. The parable following discloses that what was little in its commencement grows into a vast towering thing in the earth. The little mustard seed becomes a great tree.”*

But when the Lord takes His disciples *inside* the house, He reveals to them the narrower aspects of the kingdom of heaven. The gospel of Matthew, as is well known, was written mostly for Jewish believers. Hence the phrase—“*kingdom of heaven*”—not used by the other Evangelists—is not synonymous with its relative phrase—“*kingdom of God.*” Thus is seen how appropri-

* Notes on Daniel. Chap. IV. p. 71. W. Kelly.

ately the Spirit of God in Matthew applies the idiom—"kingdom of heaven"—to illustrate *Christendom* as being named *after* Christ whilst not of Him. The "*one pearl of great price*" (Matt. XIII : 46), and the "*treasure hid in a field*" (*ibid.* 44) are relative but not synonymous sentences. The one pearl of great price is a delineation of the Body of Christ "*after the counsel of God's own will*" (Eph. I : II) ; and not the Church—"treasure hid in a field"—as viewed in relation to man's responsibility. *Church* and *Body* are relative but not synonymous terms. The beauteous and expressive aspect of the church of God is given in *Ephesians*, of which account will be taken in its place. Too much stress, now-a-days, is laid upon *corporate* responsibility to an object, at the expense of that object upon *individual* believers. Christ must have been found as a living Saviour in glory who has dealt with the hearts of *individual* christians, or the church is never understood, and the body is never discerned. The theology of the truth that the church and the body, as relatively associated, are *indivisible* in God's omniscience, is learned mostly at the sacrifice of the *omnipotent* claims of God upon *the individual responsibility* of christians to study His word. This is to be mourned ; as it is the parent of much intolerance towards those who, in dependence on the Spirit's teaching, read scripture in the light of scripture.

The terms, "*church*" and "*body*," are used interchangeably; but the truth is, that, the militant members of the church which is *invisible* on earth, constitute in eternity the body of the glory, *i.e.* "*the Christ*" (1. Cor. xii: 12). The body scripturally considered, is the complement in the glory of the church which the Lord has been building ever since "*the day of Pentecost*" (Acts ii: 1).

At the commencement of His ministry, "*after that John was put in prison*" (Mark i: 14), "*Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. iv: 17). But this declaration to the Jews found no response in a people "*whose heart was fat, whose ears were heavy, and whose eyes were shut*" (Isa. vi. 10.) Instead of acceptance, "*He was despised and rejected*" (*ibid*, liii: 3). Under the infliction of "*the contradiction of sinners against Himself*" (Heb. xii: 3), "*He endured the cross*" (*ibid*, 2). Jews and Gentiles coalescing in that most terrible crime proved that "*the world, which was made by Him, knew Him not*," and that "*darkness comprehended not the Light*" (John i: 10, 5) which shone in its midst. The kingdom, therefore, in its prophetic character, could not then be *the object of testimony on the earth*; but, though interdicted of God for a season, by reason of men's sin, was set up in *mystic* form, as specifically drawn in the group of the

first three of the Lord's six descriptive parables in Matt. XIII. In that mysterious semblance, its Jewish representation being in postponement, it continues to this day. The present epoch outstretches until "*the son of the Highest shall sit upon the throne* (Zech. VI: 13) *of His father David, which the Lord God shall give unto Him; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob, and of His kingdom there shall be no end*" (Luke I: 32; 33). During the interregnum—the ascension of a risen Christ from among the dead, and His manifestation when "*He shall sit upon (epi) the throne of His Glory*" (Matt. XIX: 28) and reign over the earth—the Lord, by the quickening power of the Spirit, is gathering out a people to Himself from the chaos of hardened impenitence, and of death in trespasses and sins "*to head up all things in the Christ*" (*anakephalaïōsasthai ta panta en tō Christo*). (Eph. I: 10.)

The centre of unity and blessing to all, either in heaven or on earth, is the beloved Son of the Father; and all is eternally based on the voice of the blood, "*that speaketh better things than that of Abel*" (Heb. XII: 24)—the blood which flowed from a dead Christ. The resurrection, in the power of God, of Christ from among the dead—"*the first fruits of them that slept*" (I. Cor. XV: 20)—was attestation of the inestimable value of that death, and God's appreciation of the preciousness

of the blood shed. Thus, "*He could be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*" (Rom. III: 26); and the christian's "*hope*" extended "*beyond this life only*;" because, through resurrection, was seen that, "*as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (I. Cor. xv: 22). The earthly as well as the heavenly must proclaim the rejoicings of each are according to the counsel and infinite grace of God, "*before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. I: 4). Then, indeed, after the beauteous imagery of Psalm cvii., in resurrection life, Israel shall declare the strength and loving mercies of God in calling them also out of death—a people who had devoured their living with harlots; had been dead, and were now alive again; had been lost, but now found (Luke xvi). Carefully compared, Zech. iv: 7, and 2. Thess. I: 10, are very suggestive of the power and preciousness and glory of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; and is one among the many proofs that scripture read in the light of scripture, best interprets itself. It is a fatuous mistake to suppose that the Old Testament can only be read in the light of the New, and that the New is *never* to be interpreted according to the power of the Old. Both Vols. are the product of the inspiration of the same Spirit; and the great truths in connection with the histories and prophecies found in either gather round one centre—the Son of

God. Each is a duplicate key which of God unlocks what is intended to be revealed of His counsel and purposes. Neither book is understood apart from the other.

In connection with the kingdom in its administrative form, according to Matt. xvi. 15-24, is the assembly [church]. But Christ is now seated on the Father's throne, waiting in patience, until receiving His own throne, when God shall give Him the nations for His inheritance. Meanwhile, the Lord is building His church upon the foundation of Peter's confession of Him—Himself, the rock—"the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*ibid.* 16). This "*holy temple in the Lord*," in its component parts of Jews lifted out of Judaism, and Gentiles delivered from a state of spiritual death in trespasses and sins, is based on revelation of God to the apostle Peter, to the intrinsic dignity of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The formation of the church which has been in progress ever since Pentecost, awaits its completion, preceding its display, as "*the body*"—"the Christ." The consummation of "*the body*" in glory is the phalanx of "*the church*" on earth in the succession of its members out of all sects and denominations of christians—believers in Christ Jesus passing away to be with Himself. Some "*which are alive and remain when the Lord shall descend from heaven, shall be caught up with them*

that sleep in Jesus to meet the Lord in the air" (1. Thess. iv: 14; 17). The church, *invisible* below, comprises the militant state of believers baptized of the Spirit of God into membership of the body of Christ, but having no *corporate* existence on earth.

The Spirit of God lifts the veil that reveals the inherent "*majesty*," and "*honour*," and "*glory*" of Him "*in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col. ii: 9). Simultaneously is witnessed the distinction which He, the confessed confers upon the confessor. Even after Peter's blessed declaration, the Lord "*charged His disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ.*"* (Matt. xvi: 20). From that time forth began He to shew unto them the continuance of His ministry in suffering, its end in death, and its glory in resurrection. But Peter who in the power of God had made a confession to which every child of God, at this instant, responds a glad "Amen!" was thereupon rebuked of the Lord for being out of touch, or not in harmony, with the spirit of the charge He was giving of that which awaited Him! In this very scripture (Matt. xvi:) is seen the dispensational change which calls for deliberate and prayerful study. The kingdom was now placed under human

* R. V. says, in its margin, "Some ancient authorities read *Jesus Christ*:" and this reading, certainly, accords best with the circumstances of the *period* when the charge was given.

administration. The ancient Jewish anticipation of a kingdom to be established in *visible* sovereignty over the earth was presently beclouded when the Lord was rejected by His own; but, when a resurrected Christ took His place in glory as the heaven accepted Son of man, the kingdom was set up in *mystery* on the earth. Though opened only to faith, as it yet is, its manifestation, after the judgment of *christendom*, will be glorious. When Israel lost its supremacy by rejection of the Christ of God, there followed the revelation of God as a Father to His chosen *in* Christ, with the gift of the Spirit to gather unto the Lord and to baptize into *one* body. As there is always to be a remnant of Israel, so, out of heathendom, and the christianity of the world [*christendom*] there is ever being gathered, through the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God, an election whose christianity is of the WORD OF GOD. The christianity of the *word* and the christianity of the *world* are as distinct in their characteristics as life and death. They are the opposites of each other.

An intelligent grasp of the significance of the gift of "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. xix: 16) is important. They were not the keys of the church [*the church has never had any*]; and, certainly, were not the keys of *heaven*. Its portals are otherwise opened. The descent of the Spirit on Jews and proselytes at Jerusalem, and seven

years later on the Gentile house of Cornelius at Cæsarea, was according to the purpose of God in testimony; and the parted tongues was a sign of mercy, compassion, and grace, as well to the Gentile as to the Jew. Peter, therefore, at Jerusalem, declares Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs; and that God had made the same Jesus, which had been crucified, both Lord and Christ; and he then calls upon the house of Israel to repent and be baptized every one of them in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, that they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (*vide* Acts 11:). A new economy was now being opened to Jews and Gentiles, and this opening of the kingdom of heaven freely to each was first at Jerusalem when three thousand souls entered in one day. Afterwards (*ibid.* x:) at Cæsarea, at the house of the Centurion, upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereupon they began to speak with tongues and were baptized in the name of the Lord. The power of the keys had now been used and by him who alone could lawfully open the doors to Jew and Gentile proselytes. It is not a little striking that after the apostle Paul's conversion, and even after that "*straightway he had preached Jesus in the synagogues that He is the Son of God*" (*ibid.* ix: 20), that Peter's commission in

respect of "*the keys of the kingdom*" remains undisturbed, though "*the gospel of the uncircumcision*" was committed unto Paul as *the gospel of the Circumcision* was unto Peter (Gal. II: 7). But Peter, with all his Jewish proclivities, must learn that in the new form of the kingdom "*what God had cleansed none dare to call common*" (Acts x: 15). In Acts III: 13; 26, IV: 27; 30, Jesus is always spoken of as the "*Son*" or "*Holy Child*."

But all the best critical readings, including *Revised Version*, give "*Servant*," and not *Son* or *Child*. Matt. XII: 18 corroborates the correctness of this reading—the word having reference in either scripture to the official position of Jesus. "*He is God's servant, His elect, in whom His soul delighteth*" (Isa. XLII: 1). Peter speaks of the Lord as CHRIST, Son of David, according to prophecy, whom they had crucified and God had raised. Stephen, at his martyrdom, confesses to "*the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*"—rejected of men but received up into glory. Paul, immediately on his conversion, preaches that Christ is the *Son of God*. There is profound beauty in this. Peter, the minister of the circumcision, declares Christ to the Jews according to their own prophets. "*It is a light thing that thou shouldest be called my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou*

mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa. XLIX: 6). Stephen, witnessing for that Saviour who had shed His blood for him, sees "*the Son of man*," and calls—"Lord Jesus receive my spirit" (Acts VII: 56; 59). Paul, the minister of the circumcision, founds his preaching on the title—"the Son of God" (Acts IX: 20), the very confession of his co-labourer which drew from the Lord the absolute prophecy concerning His church. The revelation of the mystery which even Peter thought "*hard to be understood*" (2. Peter III: 16) was thereafter given to the beloved and honoured apostle of the Gentiles.

When the glory of the person of the Son of the living God is recognized, imperfectly though it ever must be, and the foundation upon which the church is raised is discriminated; His life sufferings unto death; His body of death upon the cross from which issued His expiatory blood; His resurrection from among the dead; and His ascension from the scene of His toil to "*the glory which He had with God before the world was*" (John XVII: 5); when such realities pass in solemn review before the mind and soul, never, as then, does Ephesian truth hold its supremacy in the affections of the heart, in "*fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*" (I. John I: 3). The incarnation and life ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, His death, and resurrection, and

ascension, involve first principles of christianity that must be distinguished before the doctrine of the Church and the Body is sought to be understood. "*He chose the tribe of Judah, He chose Mount Zion. . . . He chose David His servant* (Psalm LXXVIII: 68; 70); and "*He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. 1: 4) are wonderful sequences in the purposes of God, dispensationally studied; but acquaintance with doctrine, though based upon facts, before experimental love of Christ is established in the heart, through grace, only favours spiritual arrogance. From Genesis to Revelation is found the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the perfection of the *personal* Word "*who is before all things, and by whom all things subsist, (sunestēken) visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*" (Col. 1: 17; 16); but, in Ephesians it is *new creation*, according to the counsel of God, in the second Adam; and, every believer in the *written* word, accepting the testimony of Peter that Christ is the Son of the living God—elect, precious,—is *in* Him in virtue of what He is before God. "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*" (1. John v. 1). The question is not irrelevant, where are to be found corporate privileges equivalent to the revelation of God's purposes by the Spirit to individual souls in exercise before Him in love? We shall come

by-and-by to the distinction between the scriptures 1. Cor. III: 16, where the apostle asks the Corinthian assembly—“*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*” and that, in same epistle, chap. VI: 19, when he takes the individual, as it were, into his confidence, entreating, “*What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*” Blessed be God: there are individuals—believers in the Lord Jesus—members of the body of Christ, baptized into that mystic body by the Spirit—attached to various denominations of the christian profession—upon whom is the seal, “*the Lord knoweth them that are His*” (2. Tim. II: 19). But a corporate church of God on earth, “*endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph. IV: 3) does not exist; besides, strange to say, those christians who parade this scripture most, as the basis of their positional characteristics, are the most divided among themselves! The “isms” among Brethren are becoming a by-word. “*Exclusive*” and “*Open*” are terms which no longer express their sectional differences. Both companies emulate each other in re-divisions. The exhibition is a melancholy one; and is suggestive of the question—*Why is it?* The judgment seat of Christ will alone give answer! *Pride* has lifted its head in their midst,

and *jealousy* fomented their strifes. Churches, according to human systems, are, practically, at variance with the doctrine of "*one body and one Spirit*;" but it is remarkable that this cohesive principle less distinguishes Brethren than any other of the Christian sects. It proves, however, that "The Church of God cannot be confined within the limits of any one of the churches, or even all of them united."* When Judaism was *christianized*, Satan early sought to *judaize* Christianity; and thus the *apostolic* Churches soon fell into dismemberment, and the ruin, as regards christian responsibility, remains. But He who knows the end from the beginning "*hath said, and will do: hath spoken, and will make good*" (Numb. xxiii: 19). The subject will be further pursued in next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

"*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John iii: 5). Into that kingdom the believer indwelt by the Spirit of God, the power of the new life, spiritually enters in obedient acceptance of its authority in the heart. This sealing of the Spirit, through faith in Christ Jesus, with the conscious

* Church Systems of England in the xixth. Century. By J. Guinness Rogers, B.A.

sense of the forgiveness of sins, creates in the heart of such an one the deepest sensitiveness that thought, and will, and walk be found in holy and reverent accord with the claims of that kingdom—morally and spiritually. The Lord taught His disciples to pray, “*Thy kingdom come*” (Matt. vi: 10), that they might accept His testimony of God’s love to the world in the unspeakable gift of Himself, the preciousness of which gift His own blood sealed on the Cross. The *kingdom of God* is His rule in the heart through faith in the vicarious sufferings of the Son of His love: whilst *the kingdom of heaven* is the unfolding of His purposes according to His counsel. Both expressions are closely allied, but of distinct import. The kingdom of heaven is dispensational; “and by faith is known *to* faith through Jesus the Head, the Lamb slain, sitting on the throne of the Father.”* When “*the righteous*” spoken of in Matt. xiii: 43, “*shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,*” there will be a blessed inter-communion between the heavens and the earth. The righteous that shine forth are those that constitute *the body of Christ* in glory. It is the age to come, after the consummation of this age. “There will be the heavenly and the earthly things, as the Lord distinguishes in John iii: 12.—‘*If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how*

* J. N. Darby. Coll. Wri. *Prophetic*. Vol. II: p. 83.

shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things ? So here, we have the upper region called the kingdom of the Father, and the lower the kingdom of the Son of man. *'The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.'* These are not even allowed to be on the earth, but are cast into a furnace of fire. *'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'* Both are *'the kingdom of God.'* What a glorious prospect ! Is it not a sweet thought that even this present scene of ruin and confusion is to be delivered ? that God is to have the joy of His heart, not only in filling the heavens with His glory, but in the Son of man honoured in the very place where He was rejected ? ”*

On earth, each regenerate person, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and sealed, is an added member of the church which is *invisible*, added of God, and not by man ; and, thenceforth, waits for “*the glory that shall be revealed*” (Rom. VIII : 18), all the while realizing union with the Head—Christ. This, of course, involves *individual* responsibility—Godward—as consciously belonging to the church on earth, and, as consciously, a member of the body of Christ in glory, by baptism of the Holy Spirit. If there be giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,

* Lects. on Gospel of Matthew, p. 219 *et seq.* W. Kelly.

in the sense of *individual* care and thought, there must ever be present to a soul in exercise before God, the conception of what should be the character of the life as becoming membership of "*the body*" which is, so to speak, the highest limitation of "*the church*." If being in *union* with the Head is spiritually discerned, through unction of the Spirit, as preparatory to being in *unity* with Him—Christ—then is clearly seen how all the body—fitly framing together, with joints and bands, the members having nourishment ministered—increases with the increase of God. The identity of the body of Christ *with* Himself—the Head—is sameness in the *corporate* Christ.

The last Adam—the second man—is the man of God's counsel *in* whom all that are chosen have their place and standing, accepted *in* Him the Beloved, having redemption through His blood. This election of grace, "*according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit*" (1 Peter 1: 2) is most precious. It is before the foundation of the world, and is according to the omniscience of God. In the resurrection of Christ from among the dead, we have the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of God in the exaltation of His Son above all the heavens. "*The Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him*" (John XIII: 31). Faith was necessarily at work before Christ came, and the apostle, by the

Spirit, descants eloquently upon its triumphs (*vide*. Heb. xi). God had those He loved upon the earth before the incarnation of His Son, that most transcendent of history's events, save the cross. Jesus came that, through the shedding of His blood, His people might be saved from their sins. That God wrought by His Spirit in Old Testament days is as certainly true as any other fact of Scripture. When the Lord "*ascended, having also descended first into the lower parts of the earth*" (Eph. iv: 9), and "*went and preached unto the spirits in prison*" (1. Peter iii: 19), thereupon coming up out of death, according to the power that He went into it, "*He led captivity captive*" (Eph. iv: 8), releasing Old Testament saints, and wresting "*the power of death*" from him who held it, that is, "*the devil*" (Heb. ii: 14). Up to the time of His resurrection, the gates of hadēs had prevailed against the assembly in the wilderness; but nevermore can, or shall, prevail against *the new creation* of God's counsel—His Church.

Hadēs in Matt. xvi: 18, by no means implies the state of the lost, but refers to the condition of separate spirits who lived in times preceding the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The dialogue between the rich man and Abraham in hadēs (Luke xvi:) sufficiently clears this point from ambiguity. After the Saviour's resurrection, "*the graves were opened, and many bodies of the*

saints which slept came out of their graves" (Matt. xxvii: 52; 53): and when He ascended, holding "*the keys of death and hadēs*" (Rev. i: 18), triumphing, "*He led captivity captive.*" "*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living*" (Rom. xiv: 9). "*In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God*" (Psalm xl: 7, 8)—was wholly accomplished in the blessed life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, thereafter, sealed in His death and resurrection, that, in results, "*He gave gifts unto men; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ*" (Eph. iv: 8; 12. R.V.).

The question is now prominently to the front—What is the difference between the Assembly [church] and the Body? or:—Is it a distinction without a difference? It has been appropriately affirmed that "the distinctions of scripture are as much to be noted as the points of resemblance and of contact."* Not for the wealth of the world would any one jealous of God's precious truth, add an iota *to* or take a tittle *from* it: yet, remembering that "*no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*" (2 Peter i: 21), a student of the word is justified in the use of his privilege of reading scripture conformably *with* scripture,

* W. Kelly.

fearless of consequences which bias or *bigotry* may suggest. It cannot be that the Holy Spirit uses words with indifference as to signification. If Church, Body, and Bride, are to be understood as homogeneous expressions, congruity with scripture is sacrificed; and terms are denuded of definite testimony, by a surrender of truth without compensation. *Jesus Christ* and *Christ Jesus* are designations of one and the same precious Saviour. "Jesus Christ" is a title which relates to His having lived and died on earth. The emphasis is on "*Jesus*." But "Christ Jesus"—an appellation *never* used in the gospels—refers to His being anointed for His heavenly priesthood. The emphasis is on "*Christ*." As anointed in resurrection, and having also sealed His people with the Spirit, He is Christ Jesus the Lord.* So again, *Church* and *Body* express *positional* aspects of *relative* terms. Neither is yet complete, other than in God's sight. The church is that which Christ loved and gave Himself for. The body is the complement thereof—the *unity of the Spirit*. It is being "fitted and knit together through every joint of maintenance, according to a power at work by measure of each several part;" and Christ "effects its growth unto an upbuilding of itself in love."† LOVE will be the sphere in which the

* *Vide.* English Greek Testament. "Divine Titles," Thos. Newberry.

† Twofold New Testament. Translation. T. S. Green, M.A.

Body—the *corporate* Christ—will shine in resplendency only inferior to the glory of the *personal* Christ, when dispensations are over, and “God is *all in all*.” Law and Grace, and Righteousness, having reigned, each in its turn, God’s special characteristic—LOVE—will endorse His counsel and His purposes. Church and Body are terms which, unfortunately, have been so interchangeably employed that a correct rendering of truth has been sacrificed, in some instances, to imagination unsupported by analogy or propriety. This has induced no small amount of pedantry among many illiterate followers of admitted teachers from whom, upon some points, one may dare to take exception, all the time, revering them as gifts to the church unto edification. It cannot be heresy—even though it be accounted such by those who know not what “*heresy*” is, and others who make a ware of the expression, to hawk evil about in the garb of slander from city to town—if spiritual intelligence declines to have that made confused which needs no elaboration, or to accept expositions as magisterial, without the testimony of scripture to enforce the supposition. Scripture affirms (Eph. iv: 15; 16) that the Head and the Body together form “*the Christ*,” “according to the working in *due* measure of each several part,”* indicating, as plainly as possible, the growth of the

* Revised Version,

building (*Christ's*) unto an holy temple in the Lord — "*God's habitation through the Spirit.*" It is scripture only, Christ's voice, that has title and authority to be heard by the Lord's people. The Body has *never* been committed to man's responsibility. The Church *has*, and with results which need not recapitulation. The church is *material*. The Body is *spiritual*. The church is dependent on supply. The Body is adjusted, refined, *eternal*. "*Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*" (1. John III: 2). The church is the *new creation* to God's praise on earth. The Body is the *expansion* of that creation in a higher sphere and in corresponding relationships with its Head. The church expresses *union*: the body *unity*.

Members of the church, ever since its earliest rise, have been passing off the scene in which it *invisibly* exists; and others, supplying their places, have been added of God unto it. As a fact, the Church never really dies. As a dispensation it developes. The church is but a golden step to another and a loftier existence—the Body upon which is imprinted the stamp of *eternity*.

The body of Christ in glory is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; *i.e.*, as every member of the church on earth falls asleep in Jesus, it increaseth with the increase of God. At the end

of the age, or consummation of the present dispensation, it will be "*complete*" and "*perfected for ever*." The fulness wherewith, *then*, it will be filled, will absorb the church and its functions. The saints of God on earth have a dual relationship to Christ. In the church, each saint is a living stone coming in the power of the Spirit to the chief corner stone—the elect and precious. In the Body, each is described as a member thereof "*in particular*," and is destined to reflect the radiancy and glory of the Head. In a crown of diamonds, the tiniest possesses the same distinguishing characteristics as the centre stone and other prominent gems which constitute the whole. It is clear, vivid in splendour, and bright in its reflections. *It is part of the crown*. "If we view the church as a body or assembly on earth, placed here in responsibility to manifest Christ, and its union with Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling and inworking it, we find two things. First, those who do really compose the church, who are vitally united to Christ, have totally failed in this responsibility; and there is, in consequence, no such manifestation of Christ, and our union with Him, as there ought to have been. Secondly, those who do really compose the true church, are (save by divine power which will separate the true from the false at the descent of Christ into the air) inextric-

ably mixed up with a vast professing body, which in assuming the name and privileges of the church, has become responsible for manifesting its true character and destiny; but which, alas, so far from this, has so apostatized from Christ and become so wedded to the world, that nothing but judgment awaits it."* Then—if it be a fact, according to this opinion, endorsed as it is by a sectional part of the so-called church of God on earth—there is *schism* in the Body! even though it be the ultimate end of the church's glory above, and, if it be so, the scriptural truth of "the Body" being "*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*," is abnegated! But the extract in question fails to distinguish *christendom* from the church, perhaps, because of the *invisibility* of the church, and the author unintentionally disguises the actuality that, at present, both the tares and the wheat are side by side in the *mystic* kingdom of heaven. The apostolic injunction in 1. Cor. xii: 25, "*that there be no schism in the body: but that the members have the same care one for another*," is proof beyond controversy, that the exhortation applies to a state of things which was not, even in Paul's time, to be found on earth. And such unity was not even manifested at Jerusalem when the church *was* visible, though apparently, for a few days only.

* No. 6.] "Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects." [June, 1853.

If so, what about the "*murmuring of the Grecians against the Jews*" (Acts vii: 1), because of the neglect of the widows of the foreign speaking Jews by the native Jews of the Holy Land? What of Antioch, of Alexandria, of Rome? Has it ever been found in the churches of Protestantism, either Lutheran, Calvinistic, Presbyterian, or English-National, and Dissident? *not to omit the multiplied sections of Brethren!* Think of the contentions for supremacy, Rome over Constantinople, and *vice versa*. Again, York over Canterbury; Dublin over Armagh: and the pretence of either faction is simply irreconcilable with the thought of *unity*. To call this *one body* with an ascended Christ is only to travesty words. But let us come close to the times we live in. Of late years, as fierce a conflict has raged among *Brethren*. London *versus* every gathering not accepting its imperious sway, and every gathering, siding with London, receiving a badge of authority to excommunicate all demurrers against its *ecclesiasticism*, is simply a contemptible revival of the excesses of Gregory VII. We are not left in any doubt as to the way in which the assembly [church] is contemplated in Ephesians and Colossians; but we fail to discern, even among *Brethren*, *i.e.*, among its members, as a *sect*, the Body as quickened with the Head, raised up and sitting in heavenly places with Christ. A body arrayed against itself is too

paradoxical a thing to illustrate a figure of *unity* either according to nature or spirit. Is the care one for another, specially enjoined of God, best elucidated among those who profess to be gathered, and assert, and re-assert, that they are, "*on the ground of the one body?*" Is it not indisputable that, where love should reign, there is but too painfully manifested a malignity of spirit not surpassed by the arrogance and pretension and cruelty of *an earthly body*, whose head assumes himself to be the vicar of Christ, with other illusory claims to prerogatives over conscience? But "*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done*" (2 Cor. v: 10). "Everything must come out there! there can be no disguise at all in the pure bright light before the throne of the discernment of Christ, where all the full intelligence of His mind will beam upon His people."* "There is no unity in the scripture,"—we are taught—"as a fact, but the unity of the body."† True; but where *is* that unity which alone can express the incorporation of the Body of Christ? Is the sympathy with the Head which exclusively predicates *scripture unity*, characteristic of Brethren, as a section of christian believers, any more than other of the churches? Is it that Brethren only constitute the Body of

* G. V. Wigram.

† J. N. Darby.

Christ (supposing, for the moment, that "*church*" and "*body*" are simply synonymous); because, if so, they alone are the Church and the Body too! The argument is, that there is but *one church* and *one body*, and Brethren, all things considered, are, certainly not that. That the manner of worship in its rude simplicity and rustic grandeur, accords, *accurately*, with the spirit of the word of God, if least of all with the variety and vivacity of sensuous ceremonial, is unreservedly testified unto as being *experimentally* enjoyed; but even *that* cannot sustain the claim to be *the church*, according to scripture, unless consigning all other sections of christians without the pale. Alas; it is surprising the cruel freaks of persecution. It is not Rome only that has attained eminence in this instance. Lutherans, and Presbyterians, and Protestants, have vied with Popes, and Cardinals, and Archbishops; and even Puritans have been animated with the severities themselves before endured, and have as fiercely sought to compel non-conformists to their views, as they had previously been harassed by *their* persecutors. Then, it may be asked, "Where is the Church?" Like the remnant Israel, it is *in* the shadow of God's hand, and is covered. It is *in* His counsel, and is "*hidden with Christ in God*" (Col. III: 3). "The failure, apparently, of the purposes of God in the first instance from man's wickedness only leads into a

better establishment of them and to a more glorious form and display in result.”* This citation possesses as forcible an application to the *locale* of the church which has been “*scattered abroad*” ever since A.D. 33-4 (Acts viii: 1), as to the dispersed of Israel (the lost ten tribes) whose whereabouts, strictly is known only to God. It may be further enquired, “*What* is the Church”? *The church* is constituted of *all* believers in Christ from the various denominations or churches, and of Jews, also, out of Judaism. In subjection to the word of God, without the shadow of a doubt upon the point, the church is *invisible*, and is being builded by “*the Son of the living God.*” The body as the concomitance of the church through, baptism of the Spirit vouchsafed to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is necessarily “*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*” which, obviously, the church could not be. From the very state of things, existent and past, these several churches by no possibility can form, or by any feasibility ever have formed, “*one* body and *one* Spirit,” but are many churches and many bodies. These churches as in Christendom are *in* the world and *of* it, and many among Brethren, *positionally*, are in *the same sphere of worldliness*. But out from among these multiplied sections, including Brethren, there are saints [called] who,

* Lects. on Isaiah. W. Kelly, p. 219 *et seq.*

seen and known of God, form an eclectic assembly in *His* sight; and are in marked separation from the world, bearing individual witness to Christ as *His sealed ones*. They know they belong to the church, *invisible* though it be. They know of their association with the body, as linked unto Christ by the Spirit, which brings them into moral nearness to God. As members of the *new* creation, passing off this scene, it may be, to be with the Lord, they wait, in His patience, that glorious epiphany of *the* Christ—one Body in the *unity* of the *one* Spirit.

Now, it is perfectly true, and compatible with what the church is in its *hidden* state, that all within it may not see eye to eye. The doctrine of the church of God, based upon the establishment of the church at Pentecost, may not be grasped by all intelligences, however clear on other spiritual points. One may discern the scriptural ground of separation from Romanism or Anglicanism, or any special form of dissent, as the Jew may from Judaism, and therefore could not in liberty of conscience *worship* otherwise than in accordance with the *revealed* word by the Spirit, the Holy. If but two or three, however weak, however ignorant, are gathered by the Spirit to the name of the Lord, the conscious sense of His presence in that little midst, according to His promise, is the source of power, unknown to such as have never

experienced it, and worship is absolute. But what is lovely as an illustration of that which the church would have been, *save for sin*, after all, is only a section, and a very small one, of the *hidden* church of God. Other saints, as truly members of the church, may remain trammelled in the systems of early training, being nevertheless, as devout, as real in christian meekness, and as devoted in service for God, as others who more readily discern church truth according to scripture. The ritualist priest may be in the church of God, and in the exercise of his functions ; but, in the power of the Holy Spirit, he may learn the fallacies of a system which dishonours God ; and in the same power, at the same moment, he may discover what it is to *worship* God in spirit, apart from the baubles of a carnal ceremonial. He detaches himself accordingly. Further. Take a really spiritual man in Christ, to whom, according to the light he possesses, the word of the Lord is precious ; and suppose, he *never* spiritually discerns what the church of God is, unconsciously *in* it, and as *certainly* a member of the body of Christ ; well, the enjoyment of the blessedness of such knowledge is, of course, proportionately lost. What more can be said ? He passes away. He sleeps in Jesus. Yes : but in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, all is changed, and all is made plain. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, has

been the foundation and the joy of that redeemed life; and *such* faith fails not of its reward. The ground of gathering to the Lord in the power of the Spirit is incomparably precious: but the church of God, where to be found, and of whom comprised, is a wider subject. "*The unity of the Spirit*" is a phrase of surpassing beauty and excellence. "As to the maintenance of an outward unity, the flesh profiteth nothing. That having been subjected to a fresh trial in the dispensational dealings of God, the flesh, even of believers, has been found utterly profitless. The only possible means of maintaining in any measure the unity which is according to God, and is in harmony with the prayer of the Redeemer, in John xvii., "*that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us,*" can only be by abiding in Jesus, drawing out from Him constant supplies of grace, in entire separation from all that is dishonouring to Him, and grieving to His Holy Spirit."*

What is the unity of the Spirit? We are told, "it is in the church, which God has made the body of Christ, and that He has established it among men, and that it is apart from and above them."† If scripture says so, the argument is over; and we bend to what we hold to be

* "Letter to a friend." Thos. Newberry.

† Lects. on the Church of God. W. Kelly p. 30.

authoritative. But, at the risk of being accused of *independence*, we read Eph. iv: 1—6, differently. Being exhorted to walk with all lowliness and meekness, the church is admonished upon the necessity of using diligence, or being diligent, or earnestly endeavouring (*spoudazontes*), to keep the unity of the Spirit, thus shewing the incompetence, even of believers, to maintain that unity which the *one* body alone can portray.

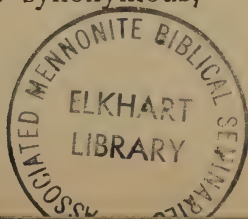
The church is ever increasing towards the perfection which, in the end, it will attain unto *as* the Body in glory. Then, as the habitation of God through the Spirit, the Body will exhibit the *unity* so expressive of the full measure of its consummation in the heavenlies with Christ. Some read the habitation of God as a *present* thing, at the same time admitting that the context relates exclusively to the glory. Examination of the passage, Eph. ii: 21; 22, however, shows that the holy temple in the Lord becomes the habitation of God. The latter is the sequel of the former, as the body is of the church. “*Ye are God’s husbandry, God’s building,*” (I. Cor. iii: 9) says the Apostle, and thereupon warns the Corinthians how they build upon the foundation he had laid—Christ. Nothing more clearly proves that the church at Corinth could only be God’s building, according to His grace, as it corresponded with the *primitive church* before it

was scattered. It were difficult to accept the proposition that, though "*wood, hay, and stubble*" are built upon the foundation—Christ, the Rock—the building continues to be the temple of God. The "*great house*" (2. Tim. II: 20) it is, in which "*there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth:*" but the "*great house*" is *not* the temple which Christ builds. The apostolic churches were built by the "*wise master builder*"—Paul—(I. Cor. III: 10) upon the model of the Pentecostal church at Jerusalem after *that* had failed in responsibility. God in wondrous love, touching the interests of His saints, foreclosed the action of sin in its strivings against His purposes, by concealing the church in the shadow of His hand. From the very moment of its declension, as an objective institution on earth, it ceased to be; while *to* faith, the church, which is *in* God our Father (2. Thess. I: 1) from all eternity is *hid* with Christ in God. As the spiritual life of every member of the church is correspondingly *hid* (Col. III: 3), it manifestly cannot be a visible, *corporate*, body. The doctrine of the *apostolic* churches was in beauteous correspondence with the principles of the *primitive* church (*compare* Acts II, and xx: 7). The realized presence of the Lord "*in the midst of two or three gathered together to His name*" (Matt. XVIII: 20), and the celebration of His supper (Luke XXII: 19; 20), as often as that supper is

taken "*in remembrance of Him,*" exhibits the closeness of resemblance of the apostolic churches to the Pentecostal church. It definitely marked the distinguishment between *the church* as first formed at Jerusalem, in the power of the Spirit, witnessing to the resurrection of Christ, and *the churches* afterwards raised through the missionary labours of the apostle Paul and his co-adjutors. So, again, the line of demarcation between *the apostolic* and *the uninspired* churches which followed in the wake as *human* systems, is plain enough. If this be seen, the *systems* which are of men and the *only* church which is of God stand in contrast too striking to be misunderstood. Not grasping the above has led to considerable misconception of the addresses to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. II—III). The digression from the question, "What is the unity of the Spirit?" has been occasioned by the latitude of the subject. The unity of the Spirit supposes the *oneness* of the body of Christ. Is such exemplified by any of the almost numberless religious sections of the day? Is not each community forgetful, alas! of being diligent to keep what its discordance breaks? And are not *brethren* (?) split up into parties, each most unamiably abjuring the other. The truth is —*titular* position is claimed by all. Professing that they alone are "*the body of Christ,*" the affirmation is easy that their's only is "*the table of*

the Lord." If this be the unity of the Spirit which is "*in the church,*" all that can be said is, it is false in appearance, because not true in fact.

But what is meant by the body being "*apart from men,*" and "*above them,*" unless it be implied that the same is *spiritual*? If the constituents of the body are in separation, how can it be a whole structure? We believe sincerely that the body of Christ, though *relative* to the church of God, is "*apart from it,*" and "*above it,*" *positionally* regarded; and all we maintain is that the church is the prototype of the body, with the exception that it is not *corporate*. The members of the church as a *hidden* institution of God on earth are militant, and are progressing daily, or should be, in sanctification (*compare*, Eph. iv: 17—32). But the same individuals as members of the body will be *displayed*, and that triumphantly, in glory, as an aggregate of *saved* sinners. The blood of Jesus Christ, "*who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God*" (Heb. ix: 14) will have perfected for *ever* them which *were* sanctified (*ibid.* x: 14). If it be inferred that the Body is *spiritual*, and that, therefore, to illustrate its *unity*, diligence must be given by members of the church—saints by calling—to obey the injunction, "*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit,*" there is entire concurrence. But if it be insisted upon that the church and the body are synonymous,



34905

and are *visible* on earth, the argument is not only opposed to scripture, but is refuted by surrounding circumstances.

The Apostle after *beseeking* the Ephesians, in chap. iv: of the Epistle addressed to them, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, with long forbearance, bearing with each other in *love*, proceeds to explain that the gifts of apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and shepherds, and teachers, were for the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and the *upbuilding* of the body of Christ, until *all* shall have arrived, *completely*,* at the oneness of the faith and acknowledgment of the SON OF GOD, at a *full grown man*, at a measure of stature belonging to the fulness of "*the Christ*." This scripture proves conclusively, that, though there was only "*one hope of their calling*," in which they were called, they were not "*one body and one Spirit*;" and Rev. II; 1—7 corroborates the assertion. Beyond question, there were many dear souls in the Ephesian church, as in the other *apostolic* churches, who, as baptized by the Spirit of God, were members of the *true* church. In like manner, are many devoted Christians found in *all* the denominations of the present day; and such members progressing

* All assembled in *one*—Head and Body—according to "*the unity of the Spirit*." *Anakephalaïosasthai*: "gather together in *one*." Eph. I: 10; or "comprehended;" or "summed up," as in Rom. XIII: 9.

in sanctification of life, "*making their calling and election sure*" (2. Peter 1: 10), are in the eternal keeping and power of the alone builder of the church—CHRIST. He consummates the scriptural allegory—"the unity of the Spirit"—in the completeness of the body at the rapture of the saints. All the members of that "*one body*" are "*baptized*" thereinto "*by one Spirit*," while on earth; and, "*whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*" In glory, they constitute the pageant of what, in 1. Cor. xii: 12, is called—"the Christ."

There are not less than *two hundred* sects of believers, certified, and recorded by the Registrar-General according to latest returns! It is not with us to disclaim the tenets of either. Out from among all, there are *many* who are distinctly Christ's; and these members of Christ constitute the *invisible* church—those who are being, *noiselessly*, builded together. As baptized of the Spirit, through faith in the expiation by the blood of Jesus Christ, they are members of the *one* body, though, possibly, many among them, have but little perception of their standing *in* Christ; nevertheless, are they members of the body which, *when* perfected, will be *manifested*, according to the counsel of God (*compare* Eph. 1—vi). If the church of God is *visible* in the midst of a scene of confusion which finds no parallel; and if the body

of Christ is an established institution among men; it is not irrelevant to ask, with which *special* class out of the *two hundred sects* of christians is it to be identified? The aggregate of these *bodies* of professing christians, some *real*, and many *absolutely nominal*, is something akin to 62 per cent. of the population of the united kingdom, and is split up into more than two hundred divisions! Is it *heretical* to say nor one nor other of these sections is *the church* of God or *the body* of Christ? We read in Acts II: 47, *The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* "Here the word Church cannot be taken as meaning some particular church. First, if that is the true sense, it is clear that now there is no longer any Church, for God no longer acts thus. If this passage is carefully examined, it will be seen that the word which has perplexed translators (who have given some, "saved," some, "to be saved," others "who were saving themselves," *etc.*), is the word, I may say the technical word, used for the remnant of the Jews, who escaped the judgment of God. Thus it was that the disciples asked if the *sozomenoi*,* those who were to be saved, were numerous. This is what is told us in this passage: the way that God employed in His mercy to save this remnant, which He had destined to escape the judgment of

* *Hoi sozomenoi*, those who are being saved, *i.e.*, *who are in the way of salvation.*

the nation which had rejected the Saviour, was to add them to the Church. But it is no question here of a particular church, for at that moment there was only one known assembly of God, the church which met at Jerusalem, but which was the Church in every possible sense. Thus speaks Paul of the Church in general. See Gal. I: 13; Phil. III: 6."* This extract from the pen of one so deservedly revered as the Author of "*The Collected Writings*" was; and who, though dead, yet speaketh, supports, as forcibly as can be, the views advanced throughout the chapters of this work. The *invisibility* of the church excludes the expression the church *in general*: if the churches were so massed, each having a doctrine of its own, we should have, indeed, a most heterodox assemblage of religionists! The Apostle both in Galatians and Philippians speaks of *the church* which he had not only *persecuted*, but had *wasted*, and which was none other than *the Church of God* at Jerusalem—the Pentecostal Church, the church which is still in course of completion, and is growing up unto an holy temple. The *apostolic* churches were the outcome of the *primitive* church; but *sin* having inroaded its *unity* which was so conspicuously the action of the Spirit, it was at once *hidden* as afore in the counsel of God, and remains so. If we speak *now* of the church in

* J. N. Darby. *Coll. Wri.* Ecclesiastical. Vol. I, p. 401.

particular, the allusion can only be to the assembly (*ekklesia*) which the Lord is building. When the church, according to infinite wisdom, became *invisible*; when its corporeity was lost, God raised a man from amongst the bitterest persecutors of His church to be "*a chosen vessel unto Him*;" and qualified him for the great mission of building churches upon the model and after the manner of the *original* at Jerusalem. As Moses was called up into the Mount to receive "*the pattern of things in the heavens*" (Heb. ix: 23) in respect of a past dispensation so Paul "*was caught up into Paradise*" (2. Cor. xii: 4) to receive of the Lord that which he also delivered to the saints: viz.; the *doctrine* of the church based upon the fact of its union with Christ, in the power of the Spirit. Which of the apostolic churches, "*after a godly sort*," proved loyal? Let the seven churches of Asia answer!

If "*wood, hay, and stubble*" found place in the apostolic churches, it ceases to be any surprise that "*gold, silver, and precious stones*" are scarce findings in the assemblies which followed, since clericalism succeeded the apostolate. The question of the salvation of those who build wood, hay, and stubble upon the foundation—Christ, is not the point. They suffer loss; but the work is burned. They are saved as by fire. The differences of Christians are exalted above what they have in

common, and they are consequently rent into parties, mere human organizations, possessing slenderest traces of the church of God. The word is supplemented with a creed, and sectarianism and schism have resulted. The external unity of churches has obtained for ages, but that is only by the excision of those who refuse to accept a *dictum* scripture does not support.* “*The temple of God is holy*” is an axiom used by the Apostle with tremendous force against the Corinthians. “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*” This, without controversy, reminds them of that which, certainly, to their shame be it said, they were not. Why, the church at Corinth was inflated with immoralities, abuses, and dissensions. Profligate in character, and philosophic in spirit, the Apostle argues with them for the repression of such evils, and shews them that “*the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God;*” and that, being “*carnal,*” he could not speak unto them “*as unto spiritual.*” The bitter irony he uses, while testifying of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, is trenchantly sarcastic as applied to themselves. Lack of charity may prefer heavy charges against a fearless interpretation of scripture by scripture, but its authority is *divine* and human expositions are not. The puerile cry of *bad doctrine* is simply innocuous

* See Lects. on Seven Churches of Asia. F. W. Grant.

where bad doctrine is not. Where scripture enforces a meaning by scripture, it were cowardice to fear to declare it, as abject as sinful. *Bias* may refuse to accept it, and *bigotry* may decline to investigate it; but it is not the province of prejudice only to separate "*the precious from the vile*" (Jer. xv: 19), since "*the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant*" (Psalm xxv: 14). Never assuming other than that the Lord is the object and centre of all scripture, regardless of human criticisms, the key-stone which binds the arch of eternal truth is the indissoluble strength of a humble rendering of the word of God. Conscience and judgment on points of scripture which are not *cardinal*, and are altogether *outside* doctrine, are not to be surrendered at the will of another, without first having reference "*to the law and to the testimony*" (Isaiah viii: 20). If one claims liberty to "*distinguish between interpretation of what is written, and the writing itself,*"* in common fairness the same licence cannot be denied to another, always assuming that the *written word* is rejected by neither, or deference may be yielded to what, at best, is the merest affectation of spirituality.

The Bible was written by God; and if the inspired penmen instrumentally used of Him in

* H. C. A. "Schism in the Assembly."

its production knew not all the mind of God, what, it may be asked, is the safest criterion of reading scripture as a whole? If, without theorizing, words were taken to mean what they imply, whether metaphorically or absolutely employed, there would be less pretension and more simplicity. As *divine* words they convey realities to the heart in sympathy with the mind which was in Christ with a vividness no human utterances could equal.

Embarrassments more often arise from haughty insistence of a theory than from any inherent difficulty in scripture itself. Take the book of Revelation, as an instance. Four schemes have long been recognized as distinctive interpretations of that wondrous volume. Various commentators of equal learning, piety, and ability, have advanced respective theories differing from each other. Is it to be assumed that *one* only is altogether right, and the other *three* altogether wrong? A little fusion of these commentaries with a fearless rejection of any thought unsupported by the word, *believing scripture to be its own safest interpreter*, soon renders intelligible what was never intended should be obscure. "*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy*" (Rev. 1: 3) clearly reveals the purpose for which the prophecy is given. If the heart and the eye are for Christ, "*the Spirit of truth will guide into all*

truth" (John xvi: 13). "Wherever the truth is really brought to bear upon a man who is open to receive it as the precious light of God in Christ, they answer mutually to each other. The heart is prepared for it—desires it."* We now enter specially upon the distinction between *church* and *body*; and *church*, and *churches* reserving our views upon the subject for the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. xvi: 18).

Christ saw the church as in the counsel and purpose of God; and, *save Himself*, not another could build it and fit it for God's mind. Having found the hid treasure, "He hideth it, *and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that He hath, and buyeth that field*" (*ibid.* xiii: 44). Flesh and blood had not revealed unto Peter, but His Father which is in heaven, that "*He was the Son of the living God.*" To return to the parable. "*He loved the church and gave Himself for it*" (Eph. v: 25); sealing that gift at the cost of His own precious blood. He bought "*the field*" which, as He declares it, is "*the world,*" that He might possess the church.

* Lects. on Daniel. Chap. 3, p. 47. W. Kelly.

“We read of some who deny “*the Lord that bought them* ;” (2. Peter 11: 1) ; the world exists, man exists, society exists, by, for, and through Christ. By Him all things exist. There is not a blessing—even that the unregenerate receive food, raiment, home, shelter—which they do not receive through Christ, who is the Mediator between God and man, *i.e.*, *man as man*. In this sense of the word He is the Saviour, the Preserver of *all* men, but especially of those that believe. The universe is His property. The church is His peculiar treasure (His “*peculium*”) ; He parted with all that He had—“emptied Himself” to possess Himself of it. In the present day this church is a hidden church, seen by and known only by Him, and so will continue to the end of the age, unperceived and unrecognized by the world. There is no *visible* corporate church of Christ now to be found on earth ; there are individual believers, and members of His invisible church “hidden” among all sects and sections of the professing church “*having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.*” This treasure is diverse from the field in which it is found. It is “hidden ;” and makes no appeal to the outward senses.”* “God’s church is owned to be the true one, but is invisible. There are practical working

* “The closing Days of Christendom.” Wale, 2nd Edit. p. 147.

churches, which accommodate themselves better to the many minds of men, and which they can regulate to their own satisfaction. Who takes 1. Cor. xii., as defining the actual church to which they belong? Is the body of Christ Methodist or Presbyterian? In what church is membership neither more nor less than 'membership' of Christ? Who takes chap. xiv., as regulating the Church's coming together? Yet the Apostle there exhorts every one who pretends to be spiritual, to know the things he writes unto them are the commandments of the Lord. It is all antiquated and passed away; or applies to an invisible body nowhere to be found on earth."* And,—“ Now, where is the one outward undivided church on earth, as established by the Holy Spirit, to separate from which is schism? The Romanists may say it is the church of Rome; and others may say to separate from them is schism? Which is right? My firm conviction is, that in the present divided and distracted state of the church, the only way to keep clear of this sin, is to “*hold the Head*” (Col. ii: 19), to keep close to Jesus, and to seek by divine grace to maintain His truth, honour, and authority, in separation from all that dishonours Him, or that touches His prerogatives; even though in so doing, we may be called the straitest of all sects. For Jesus Himself has said,

* Lects. on Seven Churches of Asia. F. W. Grant.

"He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Luke XI: 23).

"It is most important to understand the completeness of the believer in Christ, and his sanctification in Him: but his walk down here ought to be the expression of all this. And there is all grace provided in Christ for the practical exhibition of what we are in Him. So also it is most important and blessed to realize the holiness and perfectness of the whole church in Christ: but surely the church on earth ought to be the expression of this."*

"The glory of Christ present, so to speak, in the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, shed all its light on the cross, all its brightness on sin, and on the world. The cross, which began the christian life, closed the life and hopes of the world; but it shone with all the brightness of the glory to which it led, and which was to be its crown. These were the two terms of the christian life. All the rest, that which lay between, was only passing. It was easy to be a stranger and a pilgrim, where the cross and the glory united to place in its true light the world which had crucified the Lord of glory; where the world was for the heart only, the empty tomb of Christ—for love, only the scene of a testimony borne to a glory and to a love, which produced the ardent

* Extracts from "Letter to a friend." Thos. Newberry.

desire that He might come quickly. Is it so now? Are we united as at the beginning? Does that testimony of devotedness still exist? Are the glory of Christ and His coming things so present to the Church, that every sacrifice is easy to it—that the cross is light for it—that the riches of this world are only for it an opportunity given of God to bear witness to His love, only unrighteous riches, of which one frees oneself, as of a burden, in order to cast them into the treasures of Christ, that they may come out transformed and purified in the waters of His love? Am I to be satisfied when people tell me that the unity, in the bosom of which all this did manifest itself, can no longer exist, because the first Christians, who formed part of it, are dead?”* The answer to this question goes beyond the fact that “the first christians are dead,” to the root of the matter, that *sin* would have despoiled the church of God before death took away any of its members, but for divine intervention. It was not only that “*Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together* (Acts iv: 27) *against God's holy servant Jesus;*” but that “*Satan filled the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Spirit*” (*ibid.* v: 3). The leaven was not slow in evidencing its multiform powers. That quickly it would have leavened the whole is but

* J. N. Darby. *Coll. Wri. Eccles.* Vol. 1: p. 308, *et seq.*

too certain. Soon after there was discovered "*a murmuring of the Grecians (ibid. vi: 1) against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration*"—a state of things directly antagonistic to the spirit of "*gladness and singleness of heart*" (*ibid. ii: 46*) that was lost almost as immediately as it was enjoyed. If even a semblance of such *unity* as existed among the first christians has ever been revived, how long has it been maintained in later times? Had not the church, speaking after the manner of men, been removed from the *responsibility* to which it was committed, as another test wherewith to prove man to himself, it had long since been extinct. In the shadow of God's hand its development in glory is prefigured. What Satan had failed to accomplish at the cross, he sought to achieve in the church. Against the Cross of Christ *no* possibilities of Satan could resist its power. If Christ's members, through faith in the value of His shed blood, and the glory of His resurrection, are *hid* with Him in God, it is as certain, by analogy, that the church is likewise *hid* with Christ in God; and that, therefore, "*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*" To contemplate the ruin and desolation arrogance would have made of the church; of that which *ought* to be seen here according to God's purposes *in* Christ; so denudes man of spiritual importance that

scripture is wrested rather than a truth should become apparent, that the church, as a *visible* corporate *body* on earth, *is not*. If it be so, what of the test of devotedness, and of *unity*, and of love? It is indeed "*blessed to realize the holiness and perfectness of the whole church in Christ:*" but when *is* added, what is *not* to be denied, "*surely the church on earth ought to be the expression of this,*" the admission is made of what is contended for—that *the church is invisible*. And, again, it may be asked "*where is the one outward undivided church on earth, as established by the Holy Spirit?*" And, then, in what church do we find "*the glory of Christ and His coming things so present, as that every sacrifice is easy to it?*" The whole church is safe and perfect in the sovereignty and omniscience of Christ. Each member of Himself is hid *with Him in God*; and, indwelt by the Spirit, *is an habitation of God*, in the power of that blessed One acting in the *individual* to the glory of God and of Christ. *All* such believers are growing up into "*one body*" in "*the unity of the Spirit.*" If, as is affirmed, "*the different denominations*" present a state of things directly at variance with this *unity* of Christ and His members, do *Brethren* in their multiplied sections, each accusing the other of *false* principles and *bad* doctrine, present any better condition of things?

If *Brethren* are the only Christians who at this

time are seeking to give practical effect to their faith in the "*one body and one Spirit*" what of their bitter recriminations against themselves, and the war-cry of leaders of their various divisions? What of the rivalries and jealousies that, unhappily, distinguish each variation from the original section? What of Plainfield and Montreal? Who is to decide if Reading cannot be "*owned*" of London "*as on the ground of the Assembly of God,*" or if Bath is accused of "*a judgment based upon falsehood and couched in words of calumny?*" We do not ask if *this* is the unity of the Spirit, but we do enquire if this be *giving diligence to keep it?* The great truths of the "*one body*" and "*one Spirit*" are confessed unto by every child of God; but, *topically*, the body is not a thing of earth. Each member of the *one body* as indwelt by the Spirit is "*blessed*" of God "*with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" to whatever denomination either belongs. Such we believe to be the incontrovertible readings of scripture. Testimony of the church of God was lost before *churches* were founded; and it is not to be wondered at that *Brethren* cannot keep what was never theirs to keep. Testimony to the glory, the grace, the love, the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the adorable Son of God, concerning His claims in His lordship over the church *hid in Himself*, and also in His headship to His body, is

individual witness to the person of the Lord of whom *testimony* is borne by *every child of God of whatever sect*, which is none other than *the witness of the Holy Spirit* indwelling each saint. Such testimony is *not* the special privilege of a denomination. It is the joy of *every justified saint of God* who has the Lord pre-eminently before the heart and mind. If we are in *this* testimony, we are in *the church* which God conserves; and, *hidden in that conservation*, we stand out in separation from the courses of the world, and find the preciousness of Christ in *the entirety* of the ever blessed Word of God.

Meeting on the principle of being gathered by the Spirit to the name of the Lord, is one thing; and, for ourselves, *we believe it to be according to scripture*; but, if on this principle, *the churches* of the land, are proscribed as heathen temples, then, the inference is that *those* meeting on the ground of God's Assembly are *the church*. Scripture certainly, does not warrant any such conclusion. So if neither Romanism, nor Anglicanism; nor Dissent, in either of *their* sections, has right to style itself to be, *exclusively*, the church, *and they have not*; it is simply clear that *the church* or Assembly of God (Acts 11.) is no longer *visible*; and that from the time it lost the testimony of *unity*, through strife, churches succeeded. Instead of indulging bitter animosities; and, in vain-

glory, preferring personal charges which cannot be proved, it were best to be pulling ourselves up to the standard—"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES"—even after eternal life has been found. "*They are they which testify of the Son of God*" (John v: 39) Pride reasons from *self* up to God, instead of reasoning from *God* down to self.

"The Church is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. And how is Christ not of this world? Surely in spirit and in character He is not of it, as it is an evil world, unholy, opposite to God. When His spotless excellency passed through, it was unscathed, though passing through every scene that wearies and bows down our frail and feeble hearts. But it was with other thoughts also that Jesus was not of this world, and so said He of His disciples. He was not of it but of heaven—the Lord from heaven; and we are not of it, but from thence, associated with Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and is now made higher than the heavens, now in manifested association (*i.e.*, to faith, as the object of it there), in the accomplishment of what forms the dispensation in the heavens. The founding of the dispensation upon the accomplishment of the exaltation of its Head is of the greatest importance, because it is the ground of ascertained righteousness and its extent, and the seal of the

character of the whole dispensation. It belongs, as being rejected in its Head from the world, to the heavenlies. But it is not merely as the result of the treatment of the Lord and His being glorified, that the dispensation had such a character, and held such a place: in the purpose of God it had no other place. It was the secret of God hidden from ages and generations, and formed an extraordinary break in the dispensations, to the rejection, for their unbelief, of the proper earthly people of God; a forming *out of* the earth, but not *for* it, a body for Christ—a heavenly people associated with Him in the glory in which He should be and should reign, when the full time was come, over the earth, in those times of restitution which should come from the presence of the Lord; a system forming no part of the earthly system, though carried on through the death of Christ in the forming of its members in it, but that when all things are gathered together in one in Christ, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, these should be associates of His glory, in whom it and the riches of His grace should be shewn, given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, according to the gift of the Father;—a purpose formed for Christ's especial and personal glory before the worlds, and kept secret till the time of His sending down the Spirit after the actual glory was accomplished, after He had entered, in risen manhood, into the glory which

He had with the Father before the world was. The Church has sought to settle here; but it has no place on the earth.”*

That secret of God hidden from the ages—“forming *out of* the earth, but not *for* it, a body for Christ”—is the Church which HE has been building from the time the day of Pentecost was fully come; and which He continues to build. It is the Lord’s *specific* work, and is not *yet* complete. There are no workmen: the stones come (1. Peter II.) and the building grows. In *Ephesians* it is viewed abstractedly, as in truth, speaking reverently, it could only be. In that precious Epistle, *faith* sees it as the accomplishment of the Lord’s own declaration to Peter in Matt. xvi. The *primitive* church—Christ’s building—as a trust was committed to all who by the Spirit were baptized into it; and they proved as unequal in responsibility to retain *intact* so glorious a charge as had the Jews God’s *first* covenant with them. The failure of saints on earth as a body, brought into association by the Spirit with Christ in glory, could not arrest the counsel of God, however such failure may have diverted His purpose in respect of time. He never repairs men’s mistakes, but the pillars whereupon the house standeth are immoveable. His grace averts, on the other hand, men’s errors, often over ruling in blessing to the

* J. N. Darby. *Coll. Wri. Eccles.* Vol. I. p. 142, *et seq.*

glory of His Name. In Saul of Tarsus, He raises "*a chosen vessel unto Himself*" (Acts ix: 15). This is the beginning of the line of demarcation between *the church* and the *apostolic churches*." "The state of things which existed in the primitive church does no longer exist. That unity which ought to have existed that the world might believe, exists no longer. The certainty of the salvation of the elect, and the fact that there are such on earth, have nothing to do with this question. The intention of God was that there should be a manifestation of unity on earth. This manifestation, this state of things, no longer exist. As to inward life, we are agreed: it is but one; the destiny of the Church, inasmuch as it possesses that life, is to inherit glory with Christ. I do not make the unity of the body to consist in that."* Then, in what does it consist? Christ is certainly not the *centre* of the confusion of christendom; and the One Spirit, the power and bond of unity, can only be *grieved* at the unsightly divisions of the saints of God, *among all communities of Christians*; and especially so at the more unseemly sections of *Brethren* who profess to be "*gathered on the ground of the one Body*." Far be it from us to deny the body and its unity. We only take Scripture, and *nothing less*, as the basis of argument. It is paradoxical to insist upon the

* J. N. Darby. Coll. Wri. Eccles. Vol. i. p. 385.

unity of a thing which exhibits nothing but feuds and discords! We need no confirmation that Christ nourishes and cherishes the members of His body which is growing concurrently with the church on earth, *hid* in Himself, until all come "*unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. iv: 13). Members of Christ, *passing away*, are only gone before, to be *with Him*. *The perfect man*, illustrative of the measure of the fulness of Christ, *is the perfection of the counsel of God in His only begotten Son* through whom, the wondrous work, by the Spirit, is wrought. It is the Head and His members complete—the *unity of the Spirit*—"the Christ." The saint in whom Christ is *the hope of glory*, has an indisputable position as a member of Christ; but the body, in *compactness*, will only be displayed in *resurrection glory*; and this is as scripturally certain as that "*new birth*" and "*sealing of the Spirit*" are indispensable to Christ being in the saint, or the saint being a member of Christ. The Body is a heavenly thing after God's eternal counsel. The Church is an earthly thing—an expression of His *purposes* in connection with the Body. "*Why persecutest thou Me?*" is a phrase, frequently referred to as establishing, beyond controversy, the existence of the body on earth. It implies no more than it states, which is, that the Lord's tenderest compassions are ever with His

persecuted ones on earth ; and, in the power of that sympathy, "*having but little strength, they can keep His word, and not deny His name*" (Rev. III : 8) ; as the disciples of the Lord did, when they had but a modicum of strength, while "*Saul was yet breathing against them threatenings and slaughter*" (Acts IX : 1.)

In Ephesians I : 3—5, we are blessed of God with all spiritual blessings *in* Christ Jesus, and chosen *in* Him before the foundation of the world ; but at the close of the same chapter, we are the body, the complement ; "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Christ is never called Head of the church, otherwise than when it is viewed as "*His body*," thereby inferring the identification of His members *with* Himself according to the figure employed of a human body (I. Cor. XII : 12—27). If the claims of Christ as Lord of the Assembly and Head of the Body were discriminated, there would be less of the spirit among christians that "*maketh a man an offender for a word, and layeth a snare, and seeketh to cut off*" (Isaiah XXIX : 20 ; 21). The "*shewing forth the Lord's death till He come*" (I. Cor. XI : 26) ought to bind His own indissolubly together, That precious *remembrance* of Him at His table, whose presence is ever in the midst of those gathered to His name, *ought* to have been, and should *always* be, promotive of "*love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meek-*

ness, temperance—the fruit of the Spirit, against which there is no law” (Gal. v: 22; 23). Doubtless, it was not discerning *individual* responsibility that brought failure into the *primitive* church; and a like remissness became destructive of *unity* in the *apostolic* churches. There is nothing which leads sooner to disaster among communities of men than the evasion of *individual responsibility*; and calamities in religious societies are intensified through a like cause. If godliness, and order, and fidelity to Christ were being neglected in the life and times of the founder of the *apostolic* churches, it is less to be marvelled at that such negligence of the things of the Lord, and of *diligence* to keep the *unity* of the Spirit, became more developed in the *systems* which followed, when each church, so-called, had not only a *doctrine* of its own, but a *formula*. The intimate union between the church and the body, distinct as they *positionally* are, is the very core of the responsibility attaching to each individual member of Christ. Hence the epistles of that devoted servant of God, the apostle Paul, to Timothy; the Corinthians; and Galatians; not omitting the Colossians whose spiritual condition was becoming lower than the *standard*. And addressing “*his dearly beloved son*” (2. Tim. I: 2) he warns him of “*the perilous times that in the last days shall come*” (*ibid.* III: 1). In his first epistle, the Apostle insists upon the *order* of the church;

and we discern how thoroughly the normal condition of Christ's building was before his mind. His doctrine is based upon the death and resurrection of Christ, the crucified One, whom "God had made both Lord and Christ;" and upon *that* foundation with a single eye to the Lord, and in the preciousness of His grace, he built *churches*.

Even though the testimony of the church of God was lost through *sin*; and that which was *visible*, comparatively, *but for a moment*, became mystic, and so remains unto the end of the present dispensation; believers in Christ, "*rejoice in hope of the glory of God*" (Rom. v: 2), and are thankful that their souls are brought into the knowledge of that testimony, through the Scriptures, by the unfoldings of the Holy Spirit. In the midst of a ruin so apparent, it is no small joy that individual testimony to the glory of Christ remains, and that assemblies of saints, as indwelt by the Spirit of God, can *illustrate* what was the *pristine* and what will be the *ulterior* beauty of the church which Christ builds. In 2. Timothy, "questions are before the Apostle more serious than a maintenance of order. How are we to walk so as to please the Lord when disorder reigns, claiming to be the only true order? In a measure, no doubt, the truth is in Christendom, and only there; for one cannot look for the truth in Judaism or heathenism now. Judaism had its divine institu-

tions and hopes, but the truth is found in Christendom only: nevertheless in Christendom, who fails to discern Jewish elements and heathenish enormities? How is a man to walk in such a state of things as this? In the former epistle, Timothy was told how to behave in the house of God, as yet in order; but now we are told how to behave in such a state of things as the present disorder. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' And let everyone that nameth the name"—not of Christ, but—"of the Lord depart from iniquity." I must do so, if I own Him only in the indispensable truth of His Lordship—if I own Him simply as the One that has authority over my soul. And a less confession than this God never permitted the church to accept; nor in fact in Jerusalem itself was less ever accepted than the naming of the name of the Lord. God had made Jesus to be Lord and Christ, preached Peter on that day of power, when as yet much lay hid, and the great instrument of the revelation of the mystery was still shrouded in the darkness of midnight."*

If "the truth is found *only* in christendom, in which are Jewish elements and heathenish enormities;" and the question is "how to walk so

* Lects. introductory to the study of the Epistles of Paul, p. 401. W. Kelly.

as to please the Lord *when disorder reigns*:” the answer, primarily, is through another catechism. Which of the endless *sects* in christendom—in all of whom, in a greater or less degree, “*disorder reigns*”—can claim to be “*the only true order?*” Do *Brethren?* If so; the pretension is refuted by the blameworthy spirit of invective that distinguishes them, and is become proverbial!* Nor does any corporate body—neither Romish nor Protestant—neither established nor non-established—ensconce within *their* pale the church of the living God. It is affirmed that the truth is only “*in measure*” in christendom; but then, manifestly, it is not the *whole* truth, and nothing *but* the truth. The fact is, *the truth* in christendom is either diluted, or overweighted with rituals that are foreign to christianity. When Paul charged Timothy how he should “*behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1. Tim. III: 15) he employed a metaphor which is not difficult to discover. He had builded *churches* upon the *one* foundation of *the* church which the Lord *only* builds; and by *revelation* was delivered unto him the *principles* embodied in that church, “shrouded in the darkness of midnight,” as they may have

* “I cannot shut my eyes to the triple schism by which the Plymouth Brethren are rent, and the virulent hatred which exists between the several factions.” Memoir of Rev. Henry Bazely. Chap. 8. p. 194.

been to others, but were as a sunbeam to "*one who had been caught up to the third heaven*" (2. Cor. XII: 2). Hence the Church, "*the pillar and ground of the truth*," was the *one* pattern and model of the *apostolic* churches. The basement of those assemblies was the death and resurrection of "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*," and the rapture of His saints at His coming for His church.

Paul, therefore, would remind his son in the faith of the *individual* responsibility of his position in connection with his knowledge of *truth* in the church of the living God.

Under the tutorage of the great Apostle, Timothy had, doubtless, discerned the *resemblance* of the *apostolic* churches to *the* church: and, we may be assured, was no stranger to the separation point between the two. In the *apostolic* churches, Paul, as a wise master-builder, had built nothing upon *the foundation* of the primitive church—CHRIST—but "*gold, silver, and precious stones*;" but *sin* introduced "*wood, hay, stubble*," and was permitted to run its course, showing how impossible it is for man to be entrusted with anything that is of God. In *the church* of which *Christ* is the builder, sin was not only dealt with in *instant* judgment upon the transgressors, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, but the church to human vision was immediately scattered. The shadow of what then was taken into the eternal power and

keeping of HIM who unweariedly continues to build *the* church, remained, through grace, until absorbed by the *apostolic churches*. At the extinction of these, the *nominal* churches blotted out the principles of *the* Church. If the Lordship of Jesus is owned, and “*no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit*” (I. Cor. XII: 3), it brings with it not only “the indispensable truth of His Lordship,” but the claim of absolute surrender of “*spirit and soul and body*” (I. Thess. v: 23) to Himself;” and there is the precious seal upon *each* such member of the church *hid* with Christ in God, that “*the Lord knoweth them that are His,*” to whatever denomination of Christians they belong.

The life of each *individual* saint is *hid* with Christ in God. The *children* of God, “justified by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, through faith in His blood, have *peace* with God, and know that there is *no* condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Romans III: 20—31, and IV—VIII, is a precious study. As such redeemed ones are of the flock—the *true sheep of the Shepherd*—“*they who hear His voice, and He knows them, and they follow Him*” (John x. 27), among *whatever* section they are found, nothing is clearer than that these *units*, in the *aggregate*, form the *invisible* church of God. The argument conducts onwards to the realization of the moment when *the* church will be

blameless in the day [coming] of our Lord Jesus Christ, "*holy and without blemish, sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word*;" even that He can "*present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing*" (Eph. v: 26, 27). It then becomes the "*holy temple in the Lord*"—the body of glory—the corporate Christ—the "*perfect man, of the stature of the fulness of Christ*"—"the habitation of God through the Spirit."

"Although the temples of Solomon, of Ezra, and of Herod have been overthrown, so that not one stone has been left upon another, the foundation laid by Solomon remains as a whole in its vast unbroken strength; so, equally firm and unshaken, remain those grand foundation truths on which the temple of God is built. "*The foundation of God standeth sure*" (2. Tim. II: 19). The great principles of Divine truth, having been once laid down, remain unshaken, and need not to be renewed, as says the Apostle, "*not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment*" (Heb. vi: 1; 2).

"Great stones (1. Kings v: 17) remind us of those eternal truths which have their foundation in the character and attributes of God—His holiness, His righteousness, His truth, His justice,

His mercy, and His love. God's vast purposes and plans were laid deep in the counsels of eternity, and rise course above course in harmonious succession. "*For whom He did fore-know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified* (Rom. VIII: 29; 30)."

"Costly stones (I. Kings v: 17) are like redemption truths, accomplished and secured at no less a price than the incarnation, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Son of God."

"Hewed stones (I. Kings v: 17) are like truths written on the inspired page, and revealed to the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit of God."

"All these great truths have their unity, harmony, and centre in the person of Christ. "*Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord*" (Eph. II: 20; 21). Every revealed truth rests on the veracity of God who cannot lie, the Rock of ages."

"The great purposes of God laid deep in the counsels of eternity, the "costly" sacrifice of Christ, accomplished in the fulness of time, and

the teaching and work of the Divine, eternal Spirit, realized in the present experience of the soul—these are the “great stones” “costly stones,” and “hewed stones” which lay at the foundation of God’s temple.”*

The apostolic churches were not this temple: neither the churches of the Fathers-so-called which had their rise in Episcopacy; nor are the various forms of Dissent from clerical government, including *Brethren*. That which Christ builds out of eclectic members of the various sections of Christendom—“*predestinated ones of God unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself*” (Eph. I: 5) form that glorious Body—“*the Christ*” (I. Cor. XII: 12)—Head and members *one* in glory—“the *unity* of the Spirit.”

CHAPTER V.

“*Yet will I leave (margin) seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him*” (I. Kings XIX: 18). This scripture in its *secondary* application to Christendom forcibly illustrates the position of the saints of God, in the present dispensation, as members of the Church *invisible*.

* Supplement p. 45. Part IV. Englishman’s Bible. Thos. Newberry. Large Print Edition, 1884.

As units of a groaning creation, "*they groan within themselves,*" but have "*the first fruits of the Spirit*"—the earnest of the glory; yet, as looking forward to "*the restitution of all things*" (Acts III: 21) from the dominion of *sin*, they rejoice in the coming deliverance of the creation from bondage into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (*compare* Rom. VIII: 18—27). The Church in its relativeness to the Body, was revealed unto Paul as unto "*a chosen vessel*" of God. He was specially commissioned to preach that which he was empowered by the Spirit the Holy to distinguish as *his* gospel (Rom. II: 16). The *revelation* made known unto him was "*The Mystery of the Christ*"—the manifestation in glory of Jews and Gentiles who, in the *invisible* Church on earth, had been "*fellow-heirs and partakers*" of God's promise in Christ "*by the gospel*" (*vide* Eph. III: 1—7). The union of such redeemed saints with the Lord's elect earthly people—Israel, in the Millennium—will be the consummation of the purposes of God in His beloved Son; when, "*in the dispensation of the fulness of times,*" will be gathered together in *one* all things in *the Christ* (*ho Christos*) both the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth (*vide* Eph. I: 10). Paul had been "*caught up*" to where the Lord was—to *the glory*. That which He had received of Him there, touching the *vitality* of individual members of His

Church, the Apostle delivered unto the saints, *i.e.*, the re-institution of the Lord's supper as incorporating the eternal and immutable principles of the gospel of God and of Christ. These were essentials in the raising of *Churches* upon the model of *the Church* which Christ builds. They were stupendous *revelations* consequent upon the fulfilment of Christ's work on Calvary. "*Christ our Passover sacrificed for us*" (1. Cor. v: 7) was an indisputable truth when the grand doctrines of the Cross were made known unto the Apostle, through *visions and revelations*.

The *manifestation* of the righteousness of God, without the law, by faith of JESUS CHRIST, in answer to the holiness of the immaculate *victim* of sin—"the Lamb of God;" and the *revelation* of God's "*wrath*" from heaven "*against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness,*" are among the solemn realities the Apostle was *especially* inspired to proclaim. Paul was, likewise, divinely charged with the doctrine of the unspeakable preciousness of the knowledge of *justification by grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus [*justification by blood*], shewing the *plea* on which God can be *just*, and the *justifier* of them which believe in Jesus (*vide*. Rom. III: 18—26; and, then, in the unclouded joy of "*peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, being justified by faith*" (*ibid.* v: 1), is con-

nected believers' privileges, and also the glorious plan of eternal salvation. With such a presentation of *gold, silver, and precious stones*" man, as man, was put to a final test; and, according to his own conceits, introducing "*wood, hay, and stubble*" into the *apostolic* Churches, proved the utter incapacity of any *corporate body on earth* to hold the things of God, in *trust*, according to God. The doctrines of the *apostolic* Churches, based upon the *fact* of the *Pentecostal* Church, were *revelations* to the great Apostle; and his missionary labours in Asia and in Europe, with his burning zeal for Christ, testify of his unswerving fidelity to the *only foundation* upon which *he* built. The line which divides the *primitive* Church from the *apostolic* churches is not sufficiently apprehended.

It was observed, page 10, that the Church when *visible* on earth, in the power and *unity* of the relationship of Christ with God, was too supremely tentative to be characteristically maintained beyond a most limited space of time; so it is seen that the Churches which succeeded the removal from man's responsibility of that beauteous essay of grace and truth among saints, were but too soon infused with moral and spiritual evils. The "*wise master-builder*" saw in *his* day the rise of "*the great house*;" and John—the last surviving apostle—discerned, at an early period, the irruption of *sin*, and gave warning against it.

With his decease ended, historically, the *apostolic* Churches. John's death marks the distinction between the *apostolic* and the *nominal* churches of Christendom.

Acts xix: 1—9, records how saints had slipped away from the bearings of the *primitive* Church, even after the *Pentecostal* display of the Spirit's power, witnessing to the results of the *death and resurrection* of the Lord Jesus Christ; and further tells us that there were children of God, *then*, in the kingdom of heaven, who knew not that the church of God was the alone work of Him of whom the Spirit testifies. They had not so much as heard of the Spirit!

The transientness of the *primitive* Church in its *visibility* on earth, because of *sin*, could not change purposes enshrined in the counsel of God; and which lay beyond the reach of Satan. That it led to the development of religious systems suited to the transitional states of men's minds is certain; but the glorious destiny of the Church is unscathed. God, in omniscience, makes the end of His purposes to accord with His counsel. Though human systems, successively departing from the beauty of the simplicity of the *Pentecostal* model, have fully displayed man's arrogance; they have not been, through mercy, without a modicum of blessing in the midst of the strange perversities they have exhibited. The necessity of being

“*born of water and of the Spirit*” (John III: 5), and the unostentatiousness of a bare “*worship of God in spirit and in truth,*” aroused in hearts bathed in pagan superstitions, the cruelest animosities; and in spirits which had been nursed in the sensuousness of a Jewish ritual, the deadliest opposition. If the craft of the one was in danger of being set at nought; the realization of the truth of prophecy, in the birth of JESUS, was the foredoom of the other. As the *apostolic* Churches insisted upon the inflexible artlessness of the system which was truly of God, hate of what was *indisputable* became intensified; and hopes of victory against God and His Christ, through persecutions, were fatuously held. Through not seeing that what was conserved in the majesty of the omnipotence of God, “*the gates of Hades could not prevail against,*” many false conjectures have arisen. The rise of “*the great house*” at the decadence of the *apostolic* Churches, and before the canon of scripture closed, exhibited the growth of the “*grain of mustard seed*” (Matt. XIII: 31); and, soon after the death of the apostle John, the aim was shown to be in the letters of Ignatius, nothing short of the consecration of power in a spiritual autocracy. When *priesthood* sought the extirpation of *ministry*, true worship, in the sense of the sovereign power of the Spirit, in-dwelling saints, was lost. Ecclesiasticism, thereupon, gained a supremacy which

struck at the roots of liberty. As to apostolical succession, the claim is best dismissed with a smile. The so-called Fathers were certainly not *inspired men*. The Apostles *distinctly were*. "Ministry (in the sense we are now considering) is *to men*; priesthood is *to God*. The minister brings God's message to the people; he speaks for Him to them. The priest goes to God *for* the people; he speaks in the reverse way for them to Him. It is surely easy to distinguish these two attitudes."

"Praise and thanksgiving are spiritual sacrifices: they are part of our offerings as priests. Put a special class into a place where regularly and officially they act thus for the rest, they are at once in the rank of an intermediate priesthood,—mediators with God for those who are not so near."

"The Lord's supper is the most prominent and fullest expression of christian thankfulness and adoration publicly and statedly. But what protestant minister does not look upon it as his official right to administer this? What 'layman' would not shrink from the profanation of administering it? And this is one of the terrible evils of the system, that the mass of christian people are thus distinctly secularized. Occupied with worldly things, they cannot be expected to be spiritually what the clergy are. And to this they are given

over as it were. They are released from spiritual occupations to which they are not equal, and to which others give themselves entirely. But this must evidently go much further. 'The *priest's* lips should keep knowledge.' The laity, who have become that, by abdicating their priesthood, how should they retain the knowledge belonging to a priestly class? The unspirituality, to which they have given themselves up, pursues them here. The class whose business it is, become the authorized interpreters of the Word also, for how should the secular man know so well what Scripture means? Thus the clergy become spiritual eyes and ears and mouth for the laity, and are in the fair way of becoming the whole body too."* We search Scripture in vain to find such things therein upheld.

"The establishment of Episcopacy led on to Popery, and was closely connected with the progressive corruption of Christendom. In modern times the same system is leading to the same result and associated with the same degrading superstitions. The system might sleep, but, awoke up, that is its universal path. It is well therefore to ascertain what true scriptural and historical ground there is for the episcopal system. Respect for position and authority is no unholy

* "The rise and growth of Clerisy." The second of a series of eight lectures on Rev. II. and III. F. W. Grant.

feeling, nor to be despised even as a natural one ; but if the prestige of position is used to resist the truth and lead into error, as in the case of the high priests, we must not give up God's authority over us and the truth that sanctifies us for pretensions that after all have no real ground in scripture or history." "It is perfectly clear that in scripture bishops and elders are the same thing (Acts xx ; 1. Tim. III. : Titus I). In Phillipi, Paul adds, to all the saints, "bishops and deacons ;" and this, note, when he was in prison very late in his ministry, the last period of which we have any definite history, where we might have expected a bishop according to the later acceptance of the term if anywhere, now that the church was in a certain sense left to itself. So in Acts xiv., he appoints for them elders in *every* Church. The inspired author, in the formal constitution of the Church, had no idea of any higher authority established by the apostle. Thus we have distinct and formal evidence of every kind : original constitution (Acts xiv.) ; address at the close of his life (Phil. 1 : 1) ; and those to whom he commends the Church (Acts xx :) when he thought he should see them no more. That Paul knew no such thing as a prelate in the Church, he neither institutes them nor recognizes them. If such there were, he treats them with absolute neglect, takes no notice of them, but charges others with

duties which would have been incumbent on them. The modern notion that Titus and Timothy were bishops has no ground in scripture whatever. They were personal companions of the apostle, whom he deputed for special services, and recalled them when it was done; and they stayed with him, or he sent them elsewhere. Peter knows no more of any such order than Paul, though we have fewer details. Elders were the usage among the Jews; all we have from him is "*the elders which are among you*" (1. Peter v: 1). This utter contempt of the principal authority in the Churches, if such there were, is utterly inconceivable. There could not be stronger evidence against an individual superior authority in the Churches, against Episcopacy, than that which scripture affords."*

The Church as distinguished from Churches is the only system of God with which New Testament Scripture is occupied. Churches of all denominations hold within them an admixture of good and evil; and even Brethren, as a community, would hardly care to impeach the statement. Christ alone could form the foundation of a dispensation of God on earth, as a nucleus of a Body of glory in eternity. That dispensation is the Church of which He is Lord. He brings its several members by the Spirit,

* J. N. Darby. *Coll. Wri. Eccles.* Vol. iv: p. 463 *et seq.*

whom He has sent from the Father (John xv : 26), into the possession of these truths *through faith in Himself*; that "*the Father of glory*," may give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of "*the riches of the glory*" of Christ's inheritance in the saints (*vide*. Eph. i : 17 ; 18).

The *oneness* of the Church with Christ as Head of the Body—the argument is wholly apart from *the divine person* of the Lord Jesus—can only be when its members, *collectively*, attain unto "*the unity of the faith*, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto *a perfect man*, unto *the measure of the stature of the fulness of "the Christ"*" (*compare* Eph. iv : 13, with John xvii : 21 ; 22).

Corporately considered, the Church of God has *never* attained unto the *standard* of the scriptures above cited ; and, as a *visible* institution on earth, *never* will. The stature of the fulness of "*the Christ*" is the *mystical man* ; *i.e.* Head and Body—*one* in glory. Members of *nominal* churches—justified ones—members of the body of Christ—through the redemption that is in Him, fore-ordained of God to be *a propitiation* through faith in His blood—are reaching unto "*the stature of the fulness*." The Church as yet is neither raised nor glorified. Christ alone commenced the building of it. He alone continues to *add* unto it. He alone will complete and perfect that which He has been raising ever since the descent of the

Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus should die for the Jewish nation; "*and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad* (John xi: 52). Into this *unity* all believers in Him, since Pentecost, have been and are coming; but all are not yet gathered.

The distinction has been marked between *the Church* and the *apostolic Churches*: and allusion has been made to that which distinguishes "*the great house*" from either by the insidious inductions of "*elements of the world and ordinances*"—"which things are all to perish in the using" (Col. ii: 20; 22). Such were the offsets of JUDAISM, against which the Apostle admonished—"Touch not; taste not; handle not" (*ibid.* 20). Christianity was the exact contrast of Judaism, as the heavenly is of the earthly. When the signal gifts in the Church ceased with the *apostolic churches*, and the last of the *inspired* apostles was called to be with the Lord, Christendom became the sphere of operations for the intrusion of the *clerical system*. An universal church in the mould of the *synagogue* was simply a re-cast of ritualism in opposition to christianity. It was a device of Satan, and a snare which "*made captive those who were taken at his will*" (2. Tim. ii: 26). Practically, it extinguished the rights of the Spirit and His action in the Church of God. One evil followed another,

and gradually Monasticism and Mariolatry (the worship of the Virgin!) supplanted in the dark ages, the pure religion of Jesus. *The true Church of God was invisible.* Blasphemies, like other weeds, lifted their heads above what alone was worth preservation; and towards the end of the eleventh century their seeds ripened into greater excesses. *The mustard seed had become a great spreading Tree!*

Hildebrand, a Prior of a convent of monks at Cluny, in Burgundy, through a period of years, exceeding two decades, with a cunning which was simply Satanic, at length reached the pontifical chair as Bishop of Rome; and, as Gregory VII, gave to the title, "*Pope*," an arrogance and an autocracy as *head* of the Church never dreamed of. He held that "the sovereign pontiff was universal bishop; that his name was the only one of the kind in the world; that to depose bishops without the concurrence of a Synod was his right." "He claimed of himself the authority to use the ensign of empires; all princes were bound to kiss his feet; and he asserted that he had right to depose emperors, and to absolve subjects from their allegiance."* This supremacy was admitted by the *Western* church, but was challenged by the *Eastern* which constituted a *schism* that to this day marks the distinction between the *Greek* and *Latin*

* Robertson, Vol. II. p. 567.

churches. The awful absurdities of the rites of the one, however, are not more idolatrous than the follies of the other. The conversion of Luther, at a much later date, from monkery, and his bold defiance of the Papacy and the theology of the Romish Church, led to the Reformation. The aspect of this movement so far as the Church in England stood concerned, was none other than a transmutation of the *assumed* headship of an Institution from the Pope of Rome to the reigning sovereign of Great Britain; and from one class of clerics to another, beginning with a title almost as resonant of authority as any: viz; "His Grace, the Right Honourable, the Most Reverend Father-in-God, the Lord Archbishop. *Primate!*" "Time was"—writes D'Aubigné—"when all Christians were priests of the living God." Thus, truly, has the spiritual authority vested in men effected what empires had attempted in vain. "*The great house*" of Christendom is really a dreadful picture. It presents little else than the antagonisms of men in the things of God. And yet—in the face of the evils which preceded the extinction of the Apostolate, and which have continued in the varied *human* systems of the world, according to the forces of *sin* through ages down to the present time—we are taught that the Church is a *visible* body in *unity* here below, and that those who gather outside the unfaithful camp

are of it. In other words, this is simply to affirm that *Brethren* are the Church. But the recovery of the lost ideal of *Christian unity* is as vain a hope as it is vague. Alas! what of the bond of peace among those who usurp to themselves the position of the "*one body*"! Of all sects of Christians, it should be said of them—what *a care they have one for the other that there should be no schism*. Is it so? None of the *nominal* churches have escaped *schism*, not even Rome; and Brethren as a *corporate* body are certainly not the exception.

"That the Church, alas! is invisible, is but too true. And if it is so, it is in a fallen condition, it is unfaithful to the glory of its Head, it has failed of the object of its establishment on the earth. To own such a truth as this, to confess it as a fearful sin, a sin perhaps irremissible as to the integral re-establishment of God's system, to confess in this respect our sin and our iniquity, this is what places us in our true position on this point."* The church is not necessarily in a fallen condition because *invisible*. The argument rests upon the aspect taken. It was *visible* before *sin* sought its destruction. *He who loved it and gave Himself for it*, we may be certain was jealous of its inviolability; and therefore as a *corporate* assembly on the earth, having failed in subsisting in *manifested* unity, its *invisi-*

* J. N. Darby. Coll. Wri. Eccles. Vol. II. p. 54.

bility thereupon, in God's hand, became its eternal security. However unfaithful in responsibility man may prove, the purposes of God's counsel can never be less than His will. If it was said of Israel, well nigh 1,500 years, B.C., "*How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!*"—is it, then, incomprehensible to *faith* how real to Christ must be that "*holy temple*" which, in glory, is to be the reflex of Himself as *His body*? Christendom holds within its confines *churches* differing one from another in constitution and government; but in *each* sect are to be found godly precious souls upon whom is the Lord's own seal, spite the errors of the systems they may be externally connected with. *Outward* unity of action and principle would be as beautiful as the Pentecostal *manifestation*, but that is simply impossible, as "*to the integral re-establishment of it.*" If Brethren who profess to be "*gathered on the ground of the one body,*" cannot maintain among themselves the *unity* implied in the principle asserted; is it any wonder that intelligently pious souls entangled in the *systems* of men, discerning the *unscripturalness* of ritual, and longing to be released from the mere parade of *religiousness*, find it difficult to associate with those whose practices towards each other are diametrically opposed to the *unity* they insist upon? *Individual* responsibility—"let a man examine himself" (1. Cor: xi:

28)—has been sacrificed at the shrine of opinion. The beauteousness, the glory, and the grandeur so expressively imaged in the "*one body*," together with the thought of the *present* display of that "*measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ*," have induced too great neglect of the necessity of "*giving diligence*" to keep that *unity*. Hence *Brethren's* practices have fallen short of their theory. If it be insisted that the Church of God—the body of Christ—is *visible* on the earth in its distinctiveness from *churches*, unfeigned sorrow can only write upon its phylactery—*ICHABOD*!

Even after the truth of what the Church really *is*, according to Acts II: had been recovered from the *débris* which, through ages of darkness, had accumulated around it, the bloom of a revival of its *simplicity* and *fellowship* and *unity* was too approximate to the original to be more than evanescent. When long lost and blessed doctrines which had been made known to the beloved Apostle by visions and revelations, were recovered from the dismal complexities of human reasonings, there shone forth light from a heavenly luminary—*THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH*. Consciences were acted upon by that power, and in His light the people of God saw light. Saints in all parts of the world were simultaneously gathered out from the *nominal* churches of various denominations to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His presence

was felt and enjoyed in their midst. Conscience was then in *individual* exercise; and the absolute spiritual enjoyment of the movement was in moral separation from human systems. While such gatherings were *spiritual*, there was *manifested* force and freshness in their unfoldings of divine truth. The Spirit was ungrieved in their midst, and they were witnesses for the Church of God. Contrasting *the system of God*, as deployed in His Word, against *the systems of men*, they exposed to their centre the rottenness of the bases upon which such superstructures were raised. But when Brethren became *ecclesiastical*, an "*ism*" became a substantive force which led to divisions; and fierce and cruel bickerings broke their solidarity. When it was ostentatiously published that "*the gathering on the ground of the one body*" was fundamental of what the truth of the Church is, a shibboleth was introduced which ruthlessly shivered them into parties, and made each as complete a *sect* as any. To differ from either antagonist was only at the risk of being immediately charged with *heresy*. Yet, "heretics have often been among the truest, the bravest, the most loyal followers of Christ; but they are to be treated as dwellers in the outer darkness, who dissent from the conclusions of 'pious antiquity,' whatever that may be."*

* The Church Systems of England in xixth Century.
J. Guinness Rogers.

Ecclesiasticism despoiled the fairest illustration of what the Church of God on earth should be. If those "*gathered to the Lord's name*" were no more diligent than others to give indisputable evidence of the scriptural bearing of "*the unity of the Spirit*" among themselves, the question is not out of place:—Is, then, the Church of God, a *visible, corporate*, fact on the earth? Let scripture answer for itself. It is "*treasure hid in a field*"—the aspect of the Church in relation to the world. At "*the fulness of the times*," it is seen as the "*One pearl*"—the aspect of the Body in relation to the Head in glory. Blessed be God; "*the grass withereth, and the flower falleth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever*" (1. Peter 1: 24; 25). "*Where two or three, says the Lord, are gathered together unto (eis) my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matt. xviii: 20); and that will remain true till "*He who shall come will come, and will not tarry*" (Heb. x: 37). The distinction, then, between Church and Body is not without a difference; and the location of either is certified by the circumstances of each. Then, are we baptized as believers, by the Spirit, into one Body, if the Body is not on earth? Most assuredly, most unequivocally: *Yes!* While it is perfectly true that there is no scripture exhortation to keep *the unity of the body*, it should be remembered that saints have a prospective place

in it, as members of Christ on earth. In association with that "*holy Spirit of promise*," as "*sealed*," "*until the redemption of the purchased possession*" (Eph. i: 13; 14), in the joyance of His indwelling presence (I. Cor. vi: 19), the beauty of the figure of the natural body to exhibit the oneness of *the mystic Christ* (I. Cor. xii: 12; 13) surpasses expression. That body will be the manifested perfection of what Christ Himself has builded, "*according to the might of His glory*" (Col. i: 11). It will be the complement of the *true church* on earth, consisting of believers who passed unrecognized through the din of Christendom in its noisy appeals to sense. The "*hidden treasure*" is the *invisible Church* of God narrowed within the extremest compass of its surroundings; but expanded beyond human apprehension in the illimitable demesne of eternal glory as the Body—that "*holy temple*" of "*living stones*," made ready before they were brought together, so that "*there was neither hammer, nor axe, heard while it was in building*" (I. Kings vi: 7)—"*an habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Eph. ii: 22); and welded together by Christ Himself upon the imperishable foundation of Peter's confession of Him as "*the Son of the living God*" (Matt. xvi: 16). The subject is continued in next Chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

"An habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 11: 22). What a wondrous Scripture! Precious truth! God, in His omniscience, sees the completeness of His counsel in the magnificence of His purposes. Their accomplishment is to His own glory, as also to the peerless Name and Person of His beloved Son. *"Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world"* (Acts xv: 18). The Lord Jesus is raising the entire fabric upon the lines of His own declaration—*"upon this Rock, I will build my Church"* (Matt. xvi: 18).

Just as *"the glory of JEHOVAH filled the tabernacle,"* after that *"Moses had finished the work"* (Ex. xl: 32—35) so will the glory of God the Father fill the habitation which God the Son is presently completing. As the builder of that vast design, He is fitly framing together, in the power of God the Spirit, saints, as *"living (zōntes) stones,"* hewn and prepared. It is the finish in the heavens of *"the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man"* (Heb. viii: 2)—the glorious antitype of that which once on the earth was a foreshadow of its splendour.

Christ—Head of the Body in glory—will be the ostensive centre of that *unity*, so accurately

prefigured by analogy of the human frame. In this "*fruit of the wisdom, love divine—God's own peculiar thought,*"* we discern "*the holy temple in the Lord*"—"complete and perfected for ever"—"*the habitation of God through the Spirit,*" in which HE can "*rest*" with ineffable delight. We see also that the glory which God gave His Son (John xvii: 22), is given by Him to His blood redeemed ones surrounding His hallowed Person. "Heb. xii: 22, speaks of the saints of God as having come unto Mount Zion; and though Psalm cxxxii., is clearly in the main, a prophecy of earthly things, yet much of it is obviously applicable to the blessing of the Church." "There is the building of David and the building of God. Hence we have (v. 12) a recital of conditional promise to the natural seed; while the elective will of Jehovah, who chooses Zion for a perpetual habitation (v.v. 13, 14), is declared as the security of a Divine fulfilment of the *condition* not less than the promises of the covenant, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ." "David's throne is not in heaven, nor ever will be, though He who is to sit on it be there. It is to the *heavenly* Jerusalem that we are come. Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant is there."† *But this covenant is not with the Church.*

It is with Israel. The Lord does not enter into

* G. V. Wigram.

† "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms." Arthur Pridham, p. 600. *passim*.

covenant with His *body* which is the church (*vide* p. 23). "The tabernacle [mish-kāhn, from a word signifying to dwell,]" was the dwelling-place of God ("Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle." Ex. xxvi: 1). Christ when on earth was God's tabernacle, as it is written, "*The Word was made flesh*" (John 1: 14), "*and tabernacled among us;*" but now that Christ is risen and exalted, and the Comforter is come, the Church indwelt by the Holy Spirit is the tabernacle or dwelling-place of God. The Church as the dwelling place of God may be regarded in its oneness, as one Church; or it may be contemplated as composed of several churches in various localities, all equally the subjects of divine care. The Church of God in the Spirit is divinely, perfectly, and eternally one, and cannot be disunited. Not so the Church in outward manifestation, its links of association may be numerous, and its bonds of union may be strong, but its history since the Apostles' days, and at the present time, shows that though one in the purposes of God, it has been sadly disunited in its outward condition."* We would prayerfully examine this citation.

"Christ when on earth was God's tabernacle." Undoubtedly; and in scripture sequence, "*the Christ*"—the *corporate* Christ—will be God's

* "The Englishman's Bible. Part 3. Supplement p. 6, *passim*. Thos. Newberry. Large Print Edition.

habitation in the heavenlies to the *joint* glory of Himself and “*His only begotten Son*”—the *personal* Christ. At page 8 of this treatise, attention is especially drawn to the importance of distinguishing between the *personal*, and the *corporate* Christ. When the links of association which bound the *primitive* Church to Christ were early broken, like the seven thousand which God had left Him in Israel, it became an Institution of His special conservation; and His dwelling in it as His tabernacle was no longer a *manifestation*. The secret-work of the Lord, however, in *individual* souls makes each a temple of God wherein, by the Spirit, He dwells. That “the Church of God in the Spirit is divinely, perfectly, and eternally one, and cannot be disunited,” is blessedly true; but this only corroborates the position insisted upon, that it has no *corporate* existence, and that it is removed from the sphere of human responsibility. As growing up, according to the mind of God—“the subject of His divine care”—it can never be dismembered. But if its “*outward condition*” is akin to anarchy, where are we to look for its “*oneness*”—“*one Church*”—since the several churches in various localities,” instead of illustrating *unity* are arrayed in bitter hostility each against the other? Where are the “*strong bonds of union*” which, if signifying anything, ought to denote *unity*? But God makes no mistakes; and the unity He insists upon, is

none other than "*the unity of the Spirit*," which every member of the *body* of Christ is enjoined to "*give diligence to keep*."

"The Scriptural parable of the Head and the Body is familiar to all Christians. Its chief seat is the Epistles to Colosse and Ephesus. It appears also in the Epistle to the Romans, and in the First to the Corinthians, in a modified form; modified, by the absence of detailed mention of "the Head;" for the Apostle is there occupied with the relation of the limbs to *one another*." . . . "But the Ephesian and Colossian Epistles are marked by the special mention of the Lord as HEAD. And they thus suggest, in a very special degree, two main lines of truth about the *mystical Body*."* Accordingly, the Christian is reminded, and *significantly*, of his responsibility, as a member of the Body, "for the execution of the exalted thoughts and purposes of the Head;" and, *then*, "that the whole secret of life and power for this existence resides not in self but in the Lord." The truth is, the deepened sense of *individual* responsibility is lost sight of in the *churches*, and equally so among *Brethren*. In the churches, it has been sacrificed to *titular* exaltation, and *priestly* claims which have induced a spiritual usurpation of the rights of the laity by its clergy.

* "Thoughts on Union with Christ." Rev. H. C. G. Moule, M.A., p. 30.

So, also, among Dissenting communities, a *one-man* ministry, in many instances, has actuated an assumption of such importance as to enforce a slavish dependence upon the pulpit. In like manner, *Brethren*, ensnared by a dogma—"gathered on the ground of the one body"—which, by the way, is not scripture—have surrendered individual responsibility to a kind of *aristarchy* which has seized to itself prerogatives as magisterial as any that are exercised in *systems*. All this only proves how completely we have got away from the simplicity of the *primitive* Church. Acts II., gives us "*the Church*" as an existing fact upon the earth; and the same chapter specially marks *the presence*, and, by symbol, *the personality*, of the Holy Spirit. From that moment to the present, the Church has been in process of being built. The Lord has been, and is, adding to it "*those who are being saved*." It was, at first, an existing corporation; and was consecrated unto God by the Spirit of truth and of power. It was *visible*. Its corporate capacity, however, was lost immediately that Satan sought by device to stain it with the *taint of sin*. It was God's "*peculium*;" no part of which could be claimed by another. Graciously, He took it into His own keeping. Its history unto the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, is sufficient confirmation of the views advanced in these pages. By a *visible* and *invisible* Church—

two aspects of the *same* thing, the beacon in the midst of the same untoward circumstances—we understand nothing more than that, as it came from God in testimony of its resurrected and ascended Lord, and in demonstration of the Spirit witnessing unto Jesus of Nazareth, it was *visible* to men; and that upon the attempt of Satan to force *sin* within its sacred precincts, it was as mercifully as benignly *hidden* from his power, and removed from man's incapacity to hold so divine a trust. The Acts is a continuous history of the enemy's effort to deface that which was dear to God's heart, as the fulfilment of the work His own Son came to accomplish; and, upon the Cross, declared *was* finished. But to prove man to himself as untrustworthy of the things of God, giving him as it were another opportunity to retrieve, in measure, what he had forfeited, Paul was specially commissioned to raise *churches* upon the foundation of Christ's building at Pentecost. But the Divine word soon makes us acquainted with the sorrowful fact how short a time it was before the decadence of the *apostolic churches* set in; and the beloved servant—the *wise master-builder*—had to mourn the approach of "*grievous wolves*" which would "*not spare the flock.*" Later on, the Apostle John was called away from the scene of his labours. Then profane history becomes not only a chronicle of the decline and fall of the *churches* from the

original code of beauty and simplicity; but its pages are filled with the sickening narratives of devilish wickednesses against those who were of that way of thinking.

It were not difficult to trace the ruin of the Church, beginning at its point of departure from Christ in Pentecostal days, supposing that after Satan's attack upon it, in the instance of Ananias and Sapphira, it had still remained open to his assaults. But we gainsay the thought *altogether* that the Church of God has ever been, or is, *a ruin*. We affirm, taking Scripture as our alone basis, that it was committed to man as a solemn trust to keep in *responsibility* to God; and that, at the instant of his failure in the charge reposed, the Church was removed from the possibility of vitiation by sin. "*Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.*" The ruin of the *Apostolic* churches was immediately at hand when John the Apostle died. Ecclesiastical history tells how terribly far the *nominal* churches which followed the *apostolic* have departed from the *Pentecostal* Church. That history is nothing other than a narrative of Christendom *versus* Christianity. We have alluded to the distinction between *the Church* and *the Apostolic churches*, and have seen the rise of "*the great house*" therein which marks the difference between them and *the nominal churches* of Christendom. The *uninspired* teachers, com-

monly called the Fathers, who followed the Apostolate, gave footing to *clericalism*. Then, the cloven foot soon discovered itself. Ignatius enforced in one of his epistles addressed to the Ephesians, that "we should look upon a bishop, even as we would look upon the Lord Himself!" That Ignatius was a good man is beyond all question; but the *blasphemy* he is accredited with, as the author of the above sentence, reveals the fact that the *true* Church had no longer its place among men. Nevertheless is it ever accretive in the Almighty hand of Him who hides it; and will so remain to the coming of the Lord for it. Covered in the shadow of the Hand of Him who keeps it until the fulness of the times, the day is nearing—and none knoweth, save Himself, how near that day is—when it will merge into the Body in glory—the resplendency of its Head—the trophy of the Cross of Calvary, throughout the ages of Eternity! Love of the world has been the badge of Christendom from its earliest rise; and when the church, *so-called*, became, during the reign of Constantine, A.D. 313, allied with the State, the profligacy of the day was its characteristic symbol. The worst fears of the devoted Apostle—the "*chosen vessel*"—were apparent. But God's Church was not *visible* in the midst of such a carnival of lust and cupidity. Nay! But He knew His "*elect, according to His foreknowledge,*

through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (I. Peter i: 2); and He does now, as He did then:—"He calleth His sheep by name" (John x: 3), "and they hear His voice" (*ibid.* 16). They grow in the pastures of His grace. Without being recluses, they are dedicated to the service of Christ. Their apparel is not that of outward show which marks the course of the world; but that which testifies of "*the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*" (I. Peter iii: 4). The spiritual apprehension of the *mystical* union of Christ and His saints—the *unity* of the Church as seen of God—is very soul refreshing; and the due appreciation of such an union has its moral force upon the individual walk and responsibility of Christians holding such in remembrance. But if we thoughtfully survey the *nominal* churches of to-day, beginning with Rome, where do we discover the existence of this *unity*? The Papal assumption that the Pontiff (the *self-styled* Vicar of the Son of God!) is the Head of the Church, eclipses all argument; because, in the presence of such sinful pretensions, we only discover an agreement of evil. Such blatant arrogance is wholly at variance with any conception of "*the unity of the Spirit.*" It is only by prayerful study of "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*" (Eph. iii: 8) that we get to

understand our vital union with Him, as "*having nothing, and yet possessing all things*" (2. Cor. vi: 10). Then begin we to learn the depth of the injunction—" *giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. iv: 3). The aspect of the precept has been so be-clouded that many of the Lord's people have been sore amazed at its meaning. Hearing the recriminations of saints, touching the most solemn things of God, many souls have been stumbled by the way. Apart from the "*unity of the Spirit*," all thought of *oneness* is lost. The Church lost it, the very moment it ceased to express the *love* that is characteristic of the dwelling-place of God. GOD IS LOVE (1. John iv: 8). If the several churches, practically, exhibited "*the unity of the Spirit*," then, as *one Church*, it would be seen, according to Scripture, as "*the habitation of God through the Spirit*:" *i.e.*, the fruit of the Spirit would be the lineament of every member (*vide*. Gal. v: 22, 23). But it is *not* so; for there are *many* churches and *many* bodies. The "*gathering*" together of Christians "*on the ground of the one body*," by no means constitutes the "*one body*" (Eph. iv: 4). Brethren profess to be so gathered; but they are all in confusion! There can be *no* oneness in disorder—no *unity* in confusion! The author of a very pronounced tractate,* referring to a Declara-

* "An Examination of the principles and practice of the —Street Confederacy." G. Kenwick.

tion of a particular Assembly of Christians, meeting "*on the ground of the one body*," in London, says, "——Street has raised the difference of judgment about a complicated matter at R——, and K——, and R——e, into a test of communion all over the world; and, says one of the advocates of division, you get at R—— "*Immorality*," at K—— "*Neutrality*," at R——e "*Independency*," using these demonstrations to stumble the souls of many of God's dear children. Alas! How different is this kind of thing from the simplicity, dependence, and reality of early days, when there was an united sense of this the day of dishonour and shame in the history of the Church of God." In the same tractate, mention is made of "the fact that a division" (among *Brethren*) "took place (some years ago) in New Zealand, and that Mr. Darby and Mr. Wigram" (two of the most eminent, and most learned in the community; and most godly men.) "supported opposition tables." This simply confirms our view of the "*one body*!"

"In the Ephesians, when the Body is fully spoken of, the Apostle refers to the elect saints, who are created again in Christ Jesus, and are sealed for the day of redemption; that is, He sees the Assembly, when speaking of it as the body of Christ united to the Head, as God knows it; quickened, raised, seated in heavenly places in

Christ the Head. That which has wrought this unity is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, under which the elect and manifested remnant were brought on the day of Pentecost. Of course, all since called of God have their part in it; and, when the body is fully formed will be found in it with heavenly glory. God's mind as to the assembly is, that it is Christ's body, and Christ its Head: whatever is not this is the fruit of man's work; who, when blessing from God has been committed to him, has always marred it."* This important citation simply substantiates the opinions advanced: *viz.*, that the Church is *invisible* on earth, and that the Body is its *complement* in glory. The only exception taken to the above extract is, that what the author means by the Assembly [Church] would be applied by Brethren *exclusively* to themselves. In the presence of the disintegration of *that* section of the Lord's people, it could not be admitted that *they* alone constituted the Church which is the Body of Christ. It is this very disintegration of the members of Christ on earth, whether of *Brethren* or any other of the *sects*, which incontestibly strengthens the argument that the Church is *invisible*—a true corporate church on earth being non-existent, because the churches, in the aggregate are a *ruin*. The second Epistle to Timothy

* *Coll. Wri.* J. N. Darby. *Eccle.* Vol. 3. p. 38.

affirms nothing short of the statement. The "*great house*" was the precursor of the *nominal* churches of Christendom. To quote again from the same authority: "Still the assembly—viewed as God's assembly, and so in the first instance it is, and ought to be, in its normal state, and as it will be hereafter—is the body of Christ. But in that body all are living indefectible members. Christ has no dead members, nor a mutilated body." Indefectibility is the quality of being subject to no decay; and can this be ascribed to any of the members of the multiplied "*isms*" which aspire to be the Church, not omitting Brethren? If "*body*" and "*church*" are simply interchangeable terms, whichever section of it happens to be the *so-called* church, all that can be said is, that it is mutilated, and is *visibly* mutilated. Dispossessed of the elements of *unity* it can by no possibility interpret, or illustrate, the scripture phrase—"the unity of the Spirit." If, *first*, "the Church, viewed as God's Church," divided and split up as it is into endless factions, "is the Body of Christ;" and, *secondly*, if, "in its normal state," it is not what "it ought to be," or "as it will be hereafter;" and, *thirdly*, if it lacks the property of cohesion in every section of it, *looking at each*, even though it be affirmed that it is *not* a mutilated body, its *oneness* is the most contradictory thing extant. What evidence is

there of its *indefectibility*, while its living members are so *disaffected* as to be creating tests of fellowship that are manifestly hostile to that *true* unity which, wrought by the operation of the Spirit, is indeed, "*the unity of the Spirit.*" Is the assembly, the Church, the Body of Christ, in the *first* instance; but *not* in the *second*; and, yet in the *third*, is the *unmutilated* Body? We are further told: "The assembly is the gathering of the children of God on earth into one, the assembling them; but, viewed in its reality this assembly is Christ's body; they are quickened with Him, raised up, sitting in Him in heavenly places." *Spiritually*, without doubt, it is so; and, therefore, it is held the Church is *not* visible on earth. It includes *sanctified* believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of *all* denominations of Christians. Materially, the *oneness* insisted upon, is simply impossible in the presence of the differences of ritual and doctrine which distinguish the *sects*. To cede to *Brethren* the position they infer as theirs, is to cast an undeserved slur upon others as manifestly God's children as they.

Some persons, having greater breadth of intelligence than others, as led by the Spirit of God, may dissociate themselves from *systems* in which they have been trained; and seek fellowship in that which is severely simple, and simply illustrative of what the Church *ought to be*. Others may

still remain attached to the denomination they have been reared in from infancy, and yet be as truly members of *the Church* invisible, and baptized of the Spirit into membership of *the Body*. While giving no place to *latitudinarianism* which is only a cloak that conceals *infidelity*, one would, on the other hand, disclaim sympathy with an *exclusivism* that arrogates privileges it denies to others *outside its own pale*. It is solemnly true that "*every open vessel which hath no covering bound upon it is unclean*" (Numb. xix: 15); but it is one thing to keep aloof from systems in the worship of God, and quite another to exclude christians from fellowship because they see not eye to eye with bigotry and prejudice! This principle of *spiritual boycotting*, prevalent among *Brethren*, cannot be too openly denounced. It is slanderous; and as wicked a device of Satan as may be followed. It is certainly not essential to be identified with any *particular* section of christian believers to be a member of God's church *invisible* on earth. The knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and of the perpetual incense of His blessed intercession above for *each* of His pilgrim saints below is unspeakably inspiring; but identification with any *separate* body of christians is another thing altogether. Such is only to be consummated by souls in deep exercise before God, as discerning the distinction between the

nominal churches of Christendom, and *the one invisible Church of Christianity*. "The gathering of the children of God into one, the assembling them" is as unseen an operation of God by the Spirit, as the assembly [church] is invisible to human eye.

There are vessels to dishonour in "*the great house*," though that is but another expression of Christendom in which *all the sects* are. The form of godliness without the power (*vide*. Tim. III:) is characteristic of *the churches*; but not of "*the house of God, which is the Church of the living God*" (1. Tim. III: 15). If the actual condition of the Church, as confided to men, is sought in any of the sections, the search is in vain. Man's responsibility, as naming the name of Christ, to depart from iniquity, is *individual*; nor could there be a *sustained* membership of the Church of God, without this *individual allegiance* to His claims upon conscience—without the daily "*study to shew oneself approved unto God*" (2. Tim. II: 15). Neither the Greek, nor the Latin—nor Lutheran, nor Calvinistic, nor Anglican—neither High, nor Low, nor Broad—nor either of the Dissenting Communities—neither Baptist, nor Wesleyan, nor Congregationalist—nor the distinctions of *Brethren* into Open and Exclusive—nor any other section of them—has any scripture authority to claim to be exclusively *the Church of God*. Only the

Church which Christ builds is *that*; and only *that* Church is "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*"

The grand Pàuline doctrines which, as Divine revelations, make acquainted with such mysteries of God as are revealed, are pillared and grounded upon CHRIST. Upon that inspired confession that "*He was the Son of the living God,*" He continues to build His Church until the last member is added to it. Then, according to Scripture, He comes for it, and conveys it into mansions of glory. There He presents it unto Himself, as "*sanctified and cleansed,*" "*not having spot or wrinkle*"—"holy and without blemish"—"*washed with the washing of water by the Word.*" The Lord makes two presents to Himself. *First*; "*the Church which is His Body:*" *secondly*; His earthly people. "*In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the mount Zion*" (Isaiah xviii: 7). "It is not long since all the prophecies in the Old Testament relating to God's earthly people, the Jews, were universally applied to the Church, as descriptive of its future glory, as they are, even to this day, by a large proportion of Christians. Besides this, we know how great is the variety of opinion that exists in

matters of prophetic detail, so that, among such uncertain and rival claims, we may feel quite free in following out any prophetic enquiry, which gives a more clear and distinct future, and more in harmony with the word of God generally, than we have known before, relying, as alone of real consequence, on the sanction which that word gives, under the teaching of the Spirit of God.”* The *first* of these presents which the Lord makes to Himself is of absorbing interest to the Christian, even as the *second* is to the Jew.

Seeing, in the existing state of things, that there is no *corporate* Church on earth, it is plain that the testimony of every saint of God is individual acceptance, in the power of the Holy Spirit, of the responsibility of maintenance of true membership of the Body of Christ. The union of the Church with Christ consists of believers who, “*abiding in the doctrine of Christ*” (2. John 9), manifest in spiritual walk, life, and conversation, that which exhibits truest appreciation, as well as a real grasp, of what is implied by the phrase—“*the unity of the Spirit.*” Membership of the Body in *union* with Christ has an implication differing from the *unity* of the Body, through the Spirit, with the Head. “In that Body all are living indefectible members”—there are “no

* “The Coming (*parousia*) and Appearing (*epiphaneia*) of Christ.” A. C. Ord. Tractate p. 39.

dead members"—it is not "a mutilated body." In union, there is concordance of thought with the mind of HIM who is the object of reverence and spiritual affection. In unity—accordance or spontaneity of will, purpose, action,—gives the absolute idea of *oneness*—"the Christ" (I. Cor. XII: 12); *caput et corpus*; head and body—ONE. *Union* with Christ is by baptism of the Spirit (not *water-baptism*) of members of His Church on earth unto *Himself* as members of His body—the heavenly in concurrent formation with the earthly. *Unity* with Christ is when that which the Spirit has baptized unto is complete, fully formed, in heavenly glory. True union of members with the Head is the due sense of *individual* responsibility in virtue of the *indwelling* of the Spirit in the saints of God. This perception of what is *due to the Lord* awakens a discernment in His members of that which is *due to one another*, irrespective of any external name either may bear as worshippers of God, and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church as built by Christ is His own body; and by Him only on earth, is carried on the counsel and purposes of God, "*By one Spirit are we all, whether Jews or Gentiles*" (saints), "*baptized into one body*;" but where is the mutuality of membership that proves the actualness of such mutuality on earth? Is not the cry, rather, that *one sect* is right, and *all the others* wrong!

There are *many kinds* of Churches; and there are *varying sorts* of *Brethren*; but in these assemblies are dear and godly souls who cannot make an uniform subscription to every theory advanced, by whomsoever so adduced. To affirm that such saints are not members of Christ—“*baptized by one Spirit into one body*”—yet to be displayed in complete *unity* with the Head—is to usurp an interpretation of the word which the word itself nowhere sanctions. This, in simple truth, would be assigning an autocracy to an “*ism*” that, alas! has proved insufficient to hold itself together as one body; though, ostentatiously, “*gathered on the ground of the one body.*” Ah! with sorrow, be it spoken, the torn flag of boasted *unity* is now but the symbol of “*a house divided against itself*” (Matt. xii: 25). If the expression—“*body*”—has none other signification than saints called out of *systems*, and known by the appellation of “*Brethren*,” the Spirit of God, “*dividing to every man severally as He will,*” had surely never used the word with such emphasis as in 1. Cor. xii: 12. —“For as the *body* is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that *one body*, being many, are *one body*: so also is “*the Christ.*” Neither of the churches nor any of the sections of brethren have a monopoly of either divine government or sound doctrine. Neither can claim to be *exclusively* the Church of God.

There are grand, immutable principles of Scripture—*cardinal points of doctrine*—to refute which would be to gainsay the truth of the inspired word; but all Christians may hold such articles of faith with equal tenacity, while claiming to differ upon the distinction between *churches* and the Church of God. One might be wary to accept all that *Brethren* write or say, as much as sober reason would discredit the pretension that Bishops are, *lineally*, the successors of the Apostles. The gravity and weight of the responsibility of Christian believers to seek by the Spirit of God, to discern the pristine beauty of the once visible Church of God, in the day of Pentecost; and to discover how far the *nominal* churches of the day, in breaking away from original simplicity, have made a *rapprochement* to Chaldean types of rites and ceremonies, festivals and priesthood, must be left to individual exercise of soul. “The claims of each portion of Christendom to be a church or assembly of God, must be tried, not by its own pretensions, but by scripture, and then they are easily disposed of, unless corruption and Christianity are identical.”* The Apostle in 1. Cor. XII., occupied with the diversities of gifts by the “one and self-same Spirit,” in beautiful appropriateness, employs the figure of the human body to illustrate, not only the relation of one member to

* *Coll. Wri.* J. N. Darby. *Eccle.* Vol. III: p. 63.

another, but the mutual dependence of all on each "*that there should be no schism.*" Its unity is "*in Christ*" (Rom. XII: 5). But this unity—"the Christ"—has not yet been manifested. The fact of that intense presence of the Lord with "the Body" as *one* with Himself in heavenly glory, gives to the divine allegory a verity surpassing human ken. The absence of mention of "*the Head,*" in I. Cor. XII., is significant. The structure of the figure teaches that the harmony of its several members depends on their *union*—not unity—with Christ; being "*dead with Him from the elements of the world,*" and "*holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*" (Col. II: 20; 19). Cause and effect are manifested in the upward growth of souls in "*fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*" (I. John I: 3). There is no thought of belonging to this or that denomination. It is the member *in Christ* (*communion*); and Christ *in the member*—"the hope of glory." It is neither Episcopalian, nor Presbyterian, nor Methodist, nor *Brethren*; but, without controversy, it is godly association with Christ, in the power of the Spirit. It is not identification with any *sect* of Christians, but absolute separation from the world in whole surrender of "*spirit, soul, and body*" to God. These are they—the *sealed units*

of God—who, “*if they suffer as Christians, are not ashamed; but glorify God on this behalf*” (1. Peter iv: 16); “*and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom they also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph. ii: 20—22). Thus have we the absolute presentation of unity; Head and Body complete—Christ and His members One. It is the accomplishment of what “*gifts*” were for, to bring “*into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ*” (Eph. iv: 13). Blessed be God, through the life giving power of His Spirit, it can be said that *all* His children have been brought unto the knowledge of His Son. They are not yet, however, *all* come into the *unity* of the faith, nor “*unto the measure of the stature*” of the fulness of “*a perfect man*” which is “*the Christ:*” *i.e.*, the corporate Christ. That unity and that stature of fulness will have its display in glory before ever its lustre will shine over the earth. “*When the Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*” (2. Thess. ii: 10); then, that perfect man—the Lord and His “*glorified saints who accompany Him when He comes, form a part of the rays of*

His glory, and shine forth like the rays of the sun when it appears, forming a part of its light, whilst it shines *upon* those who are on the earth, who also, being there, must wait the gradual dawning of the day.”*

The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us. “*We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2. Cor. III: 18). Thus we grow up into the Head; all that is in Christ is the means of forming us by the power of the Holy Spirit into the same image. And in Ephesians, again, we are to grow up into Him who is the Head (the exalted Christ) in all things, even Christ. “Hence the truth as it is in Jesus is the having “*put off the old man*” altogether, and “*put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. IV: 22—24). It is a new creature formed after God and into God’s image.”†

In the present state of the *churches* it is more evident, as study is given to the subject, that the Church of God is *invisible*; and that the failure of responsibility at Pentecost has never been repaired. God delivered the Church from the *ruin* in which

* See *foot note*, Tractate, p. 9. “The Coming of Christ, and His appearing.” A. C. Ord.

† *Coll. Wri.* J. N. Darby. *Doct.* Vol. 3. p. 119, *et seq.*

Satan sought to envelope it, in its earliest infancy. Hidden, instantly, it was kept uncontaminated as the Lord's own building. If Satan "*filled the hearts*" of Ananias and Sapphira "*to tempt the Spirit of the Lord,*" and "*to lie*" to that august Power, and unseen Person, Peter was immediately endowed with the divine inflatus of that Spirit to execute urgent judgment upon those who would have brought *sin* into the Church. It is not the thought that Ananias and Sapphira were lost souls beneath the justice of an imperative sentence. It has resemblance in some important points, with the case of David bringing up the ark of God; when the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah for putting forth his hand to take hold thereof; and God smote him for his error, and he died by the ark (*vide* 2. Sam. vi: 6—10). In the record in Acts v., we discern that Satan was defeated at his *expectant* moment, and that the Church was saved from the *ruin*, we bless the Lord, it has *never* been permitted to fall into. The *apostolic* churches, losing their near resemblance to the Pentecostal Church of God, became a *ruin* as "*entangled again with the yoke of bondage*" (Gal. v. 1); and, succeeding them in still further declension from original simplicity and "*the truth in Christ,*" the *nominal* churches of Christendom are, at the present day, scripturally considered, nothing but a wreck and a *ruin*. The idea of

"one grand ecclesiastical corporation" is as absurd a contention as that "*the Church of God is a corporate body on earth without responsibility!*" Thus, strangely, do *extremes* meet. It is true that *Brethren*, by their writings, have insisted upon the doctrine of the *one* body, *visible* below; but, withal, during the last forty years, they have been arrayed against themselves—"Plymouth *versus* "Bethesda" and "Bethesda" *versus* "Plymouth;" and *both* competing in rancour against any who dare to differ from either. Their quarrels have been multiplied, their jealousies have become more cruel, and their vindictivenesses more intensified. The one party can be as *exclusive* as the other when the occasion suits to indulge in "*boycotting*." During the last decade of years, hundreds of pamphlets have issued from the Press replete with acrimony, and overfreighted with bitterest invectives—*clique* against *clique*. All one has learned by this painful fiasco of *exclusivism* is that doctrine, too often runs a-head of practice, forgetting the injunction—"giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The impeachment is unimpeachable.

CHAPTER VII.

"*One Body, and one Spirit*" (Eph. iv: 4). It is held that "one of the precious characteristics of the Church" is that as a visible body of Christians on the earth, it is "the habitation of God." Next we are told that scripture never uses the expression "*invisible Church*." Granted: neither does scripture ever once name the Church as "*the Bride of the Lamb*." "There is a depth and a fulness in the inspired volume called the Bible, which at first sight might not be apparent. It is a revelation from One who has not revealed all that He knows, but only all that is good for the creature to know. So in studying the written Word we are brought into intercourse with the thoughts of Him whose mind is not fathomed by the revelation He has vouchsafed, though He must always speak from the height and fulness of His own knowledge and purposes. Hence the conviction must force itself on the subject-mind of the necessity for considering, both the form in which the truth is revealed, and the teaching also contained in the revelation, which is not always apparent on its surface."*

* "Christian Standing and Condition." Pamphlet, 2nd Edit. p. 3. C. E. Stuart.

Throughout former pages of this work, it has been reverently insisted upon that the Church was only *manifested* in its infancy; and that as an existing *visible* corporation, it soon ceased to be. It was *hidden* the moment Satan sought its pollution and ruin. According to the beautiful parable (Matt. XIII: 44), it was "*treasure hid in a field*" [the world]. "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John III: 16); and "*Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it*" (Eph. v: 24). He bought the field wherein the treasure lay hidden—"dead in trespasses and sins." "*We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead*" (2. Cor. v: 14.) He *hid* that treasure, and "*for joy sold all that He had*" to possess Himself of it. So Scripture saith. The Church is composed of *saved* sinners, both of Jews and Gentiles, "*accepted in the Beloved; in whom is redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*" (Eph. i; 6; 7). Such was the price paid for it. "Salvation is true of those that are in and of the church. The Lord does not leave "such as should be saved" in their old associations, but gradually builds them together into the church. But the two ideas are so totally distinct, that, all through the Old Testament, there were "such as should be saved," and yet there was no "church of God,"

in the sense we are now deducing from scripture. The assembly of Israel no doubt there was, and it is called the "congregation of Jehovah"—the "assembly," if you will, of Jehovah; but then that was merely the nation, the entire mass of the Jewish people. It was out of this very nation that the first nucleus of "the church" was taken; and the Holy Spirit having just come down to dwell in those that were already there, the Lord takes the others that were converted at Pentecost or afterwards, and adds them to the existing body—the church now in course of formation. Evidently, therefore, the first covenant state that was now ready to vanish away answers to what people mean when they speak of "a visible and invisible church." They would call the Jewish nation the *visible* church, and "such as should be saved" in their midst, the *invisible* church." Careful examination of this quotation, we trust may be with profit. We assume there are few intelligent Christians who would call "the Jewish nation" *the visible* Church of God; nor can we credit the thought that any believe that "such as *should* be saved" are the *invisible* church.

The sarcasm is a little wide of the mark, and so creates a smile. It is indisputable that *of* "such as should be saved"—or, "those who are *being*

* "Lects. on the Church of God." 4th *Edit.* Revised p. 83. *et seq.* W. Kelly.

saved," together with such as *are* saved—the Church will be composed. If it be "now in course of formation;" and *is it not?* then, it is not complete. And, if not complete, in what sense is it the body on earth *united* to its Head in heavenly glory? There are bodies of believers on earth, but, in a greater or less degree, there is *schism* in *all of them*. Who can conceive *schism* in the body of Christ which, in display, will be the temple of God. Doubtless, "salvation is true of those that are *in* and *of* the church." But, in the presence of the universal apostasy of the *churches*, which can claim to be *the church*? "*He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*"—mark, not unto "*the Church.*" The churches are *visible* enough; but *where*, and *which*, is the *visible Church*? "*He that hath an ear;*" and, "*to him that overcometh*"—to which ever of the *seven churches* in Asia belonging—these exhortations are *personally* addressed. There is *individual* responsibility and reward. The *churches* of the present day are all out of touch with *each other*, and will all be dealt with *corporately*, as to their departure from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. Rev. I, and II, teach as much, and more. But it is plain that in these *churches* there are individuals who, although *in* them, are not *of* them. There may be small excuse for such a state of things; but painful though it be, the fact remains. Too many people

read their Bible upon the authority of Commentaries. To quote again from same Lecture—"The assembly [church] necessarily supposes a gathering of the saints into one body, separate from the rest of mankind." But where is this assembly [*one* body] so "separate from the rest of mankind," that its claims to be such are sustained by "*the fruit of the Spirit?*" (*vide*. Gal. v: 22; 23). It cannot be in the *nominal* churches for they rival each other in rites and forms and governments. It cannot be found among *Brethren*. They are divided into factions, and are very angry, *indeed*, with each other. Yet they insist upon the *unity* of the body on earth! But is not each section of them an irresolvable discord? Ourselves are witnesses that we do *not* dwell together in unity. A clergyman lately inhibited from preaching in a Dissenting pulpit declares that "the life of Christ's Church was derived not from something trickling through a bishop's fingers when he laid hands on a priest's head, nor from methods of the Church of England, but from the *spirituality* of its members.* A late devoted servant now with the Lord, says that "Brethren have gradually fallen into a committee of management either metropolitan or provincial, and accepted its control and edicts.† It is simply

* Rev. H. R. Haweis.

† James E. Batten. *Cheltenham*.

futile, in the presence of over much to the contrary, to assert the *visibility* of the Church as *one* body.

And it is ungenerous to imply that if one cannot accept the *ipsissima verba* of any particular reading of scripture, it "is only helping on the spirit of infidelity in the world." We are second to none in deep reverential awe and love of God's precious Word; but we cannot be bound to accept any special interpretation, through whose ever fingers it may trickle. We are assured that to the simple, believing, and trustful, the Spirit of truth, guiding into all truth, and receiving of the things of Christ, will shew them unto such (*vide*. John xvi: 13—15). Each member of Christ is responsible to *Him*. "I could not give up my personal responsibility to Christ (miserably as I may fail in it) for all the church ten times told over." . . . "Do not mind the whole church (they are but "chaff") when they interfere with responsibility to the Lord."*

We believe "one of the precious characteristics of the Church" is that, as secretly builded of Christ, it is representative of an elect remnant of Christians according to the foreknowledge of God, called and chosen of Him. As a *visible* corporation it has no existence. Who knows where the elect earthly remnant (Israel) is? A tolerably

* *Coll. Wri.* J. N. Darby. *Doct.* Vol. ix., p. 459.

accurate guess of their locality may be made ; but we accept God's word as to their restoration, and it suffices. There are individuals in all the *nominal* churches, who, "*naming the name of Christ, depart from iniquity ;*" and are "*vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use*" (2. Tim. II: 19; 21). These units, many of them, may be *in* the "great house"—*i.e.*, associated with the rituals and governments of *churches*—all the while, not being *of* it ; as all *true* Christians are *in* the world without being *of* the world. So again, many others, with enlarged spiritual intelligence, may dissociate themselves from ceremonies and administrations which they feel to be contrary to Scripture. Simply gathering as two or three to the Lord's name, in the assurance of His presence in their midst (*vide*. Matt. XVIII: 20), they realize their position, as dependent upon the Holy Spirit to guide and direct in the worship of God. They give to the Lord's Supper its due and prominent place, ever remembering that as the Apostle received of the Lord Jesus, so also he delivered to the saints. They remember the Lord, as shewing forth His death till He come (*vide*. I. Cor. XI: 23—26). Such Christians imbibe the spirit of the remnant, awaiting the coming of the Lord for His church without claiming, *exclusively*, to be *the* Church. It is one thing to come out from the religious systems of Christendom in separation

from the moral and external evil of the same; and quite another to set up claims of being on "*divine ground*," while practice only violates the profession of the "*one body and one Spirit*." It is mere assumption to talk about "*clearing the testimony*," by cutting off the Lord's people who refuse to bend to a spiritual despotism which, if it had the power, would be as cruel as Rome. Let us listen to a voice from Plymouth. "My conviction is, that worldliness and earthly mindedness have blinded the eyes, and hardened the hearts, to an extent very few of us have any idea of; and that, as a consequence, no case touching upon the morality of the church's walk can be fairly judged by the mass of believers. In cases innumerable which have occurred, the affections to Christ Himself have not been lively enough to make persons indignant at open insults put upon Christ, and determined to stand apart from that which, in its association, was minded to sanction dishonour done to Him."

"God has "A CHURCH." God has not been ashamed to connect His name with one church—the church of the living God. Oft He calls it, "The Church of God." This it was which Christ calls "My Church." And oh, how wondrous! Christ given of God to be head over all things to the church, *which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*

"Child of God! can you *shew me* this church? I have a picture of it, dear to my heart, in the Scriptures; but I have sought that which the Word of God describes as the church, and have not found it, as it could once be found at Jerusalem."*

"It is a solemn yet certain truth that, when God's people depart from Him, they are apt to go farther astray than all others. Without the guardianship of Him whom they have slighted, they become especial sport of Satan and the most desired victims of his wiles, in order to compass by them the more effectually the dishonour of the living God, and if possible make a hopeless estrangement on His part. What a riddle is the moral history of the world and of man to all who see not the conflict between God and His enemy! Then Jerusalem was in question, now it is the Church; but it is ever the opposition of the devil to the Son of God, and universally in the especial arena, for the time being, of His glory."†

Yes: we re-iterate the truth, "*God has a Church,*" and "*Christ is given of God to be head over all things to the church which is His body.*" We have often been referred to an imagery it is to our purpose to cite. It has been accepted as proof to "*the present actuality of Christ's body upon*

* Pamphlet. Third Edit. "A Cry from Bochim." S.S.

† "The Bible Treasury." October 1872. No. 197, p. 145.

earth." The writer of the following paragraph states his views thus ; " Let me put a figure before my reader, which will convey simply the fact that the entire number of saints *in the world at any given time* (just as I write these words for instance), indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is that which is recognised of God as the body of Christ. Let us suppose a regiment of soldiers, a thousand strong, goes to India, and serves there for many years. All those who compose that regiment die off, or are slain in battle, and their places are filled up by others—the numerical strength of the regiment is kept up—after years of service, the time comes for it to return home—not a man who went out, is in it now, and yet the *same regiment* returns without change of its number or facings or identity. Thus with the body of Christ. Those who composed it in the days of Paul, are not here, yet the body has passed along through the last eighteen centuries, the members of it dying off, and the ranks filled up by others, and now at the end of the journey the body *is here*—the Holy Spirit who constitutes its unity, being here—as perfect in its unity, as ever it was."* But of late, *the former designations* of the Regiments *have been changed!* Human wisdom may employ a false figure to illustrate an idea ; and, of course, the

* " There is one Body and one Spirit ;" and " The unity of the Spirit," *Pamph.* 3rd. *Edit.* p. 14. F. G. Patterson.

illustration is as faulty as the figure. It is so in the above quotation. No weaker elucidation could be offered ; nor more convincing evidence to the insufficiency of human argument based upon what is simply hypothesis and not scripture. One might say that the lion is the symbol of *nobleness* which is no more true of its nature than the tiger's. But when the Spirit of God uses a figure, its *exactitude* is absolute. Take "*body*" and "*bride*" as illustrious examples. Figures in the inspired Word are true to the fact of which they are allusive. The Bible is a book of divine depths. But the subject-mind, yielding to the light of the Spirit of God, discerns truth as God would have truth-seekers become possessors of it. It were best to fix the eye simply and singly *on* Christ. The army of one thousand soldiers was complete in its numerical strength at its starting. The body of Christ, which is concurrent with the church of God, is *not* complete but is going on *to* completion. Scripture uses the *natural* body as the symbol of a building *growing* unto an holy temple *in* the Lord. Until the last member is added to the Church, and the rapture of the saints has followed, the *spiritual* body will not be complete. The mystic building of the Church ever since Pentecost goes on until all the scaffolding taken down, it merges into the display of the glory.

The Lord is forming *individuals* in this scene of

conflict below, to be in association with Himself above to the praise of the glory of God's grace throughout eternity. Members of the *invisible* Church may pass from off the earth to be at *rest* with the Lord; but as the Church decreases numerically, so the *mystic* body increases on to *perfection*. The Church is specially unique—*hid* with Christ in God, historic emblem of its place. When these specific members united to the Head come to be displayed as "*one* body," their *identity* will be positive. Is not the *life* of each saint on earth "*hid with Christ in God?*"

That which distinguished saints in the world—*likeness to the Master, imperfect though the resemblance was*—will, in the heavenlies, be intensified into the resplendency of HIM, the Beloved. "*We shall be like Him, when He shall appear; for we shall see Him as He is* (1. John. III: 2). This kind of *identity* and *identification* is certainly not best illustrated by the supposition of the regiment which went out to India, every member of which *died* out! The places of these *dead men* had to be filled by *other men* who, notwithstanding their facings, were not the *same* members; albeit, the regiment bore the *same name*. *It had died out!* New men stood up in dress after pattern of the old. But who could identify *one* of the thousand? The number of every man on the roll call would be a falsification of the identity of the soldier who

went abroad with his regiment! With the Church, how different. When any member falls asleep in Jesus, *there is no thought of death!* It is only the "*earthly house of this tabernacle dissolved.*" "*Absent from the [natural] body, present with the Lord.*" There is no idea of the vacancy being filled up. *It never is.* The increase is to the mystic body of Christ, which increase goes on to its completeness as the "*building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*" When the members of that body—God's wondrous thought!—stand "*clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life*" (*vide.* 2. Cor. v: 1—8); when countless myriads made like unto their Lord, surrounding His blessed Person, reflect of His radiance and beauty, themselves filled therewith, *identity* and *identification* will be without uncertainty. Stupendous truth: *none will have died out!* A member of Christ on earth, according to God's counsel, is seen a member of His body, in glory, after God's purposes. The *armour* is Christ. The *number* is Christ. The *facings* is Christ. The *identity* is Christ. If the Church of God is *visible* as the body "*here*" on earth, *i.e.*, "*one body and one Spirit,*" after what manner has it glorified its Builder and Head—the Lord Jesus Christ? And, if it has not, where is the evidence of its *unity*? and, if the *unity* of the same be irrevocably broken, and its members dispersed

under *this* name and *that*, is it reasonable to insist upon the *visibility* of the Church, and the *simultaneous* presence of the Body? It is chiefly among *Brethren* this dogma is held—the unity of the body on earth; and, strange to say, of all the *sects*, they are the most shattered into fragments. “Is there not a wide contrast between the church of God as at the beginning, and a sect now? The church of God was composed of all true believers on earth, owning one Head alone, the Lord Jesus Christ, gathered to one centre—Christ. A sect now does not own Christ as the only centre and Head; if it did, it would at once cease to be a sect. But it owns a Pope, an Emperor, a King, a Conference, a Wesley, a Calvin, or it may be an independent fragment of the church, owning for its head a minister over *his* members. But in all these there is the not holding the Head, Christ, as the only centre. There is utter departure, in these and all other cases, from the true scriptural idea of the Church.”* However true in theory this may be, honesty compels us to add a rider to it. When *Brethren* are publishing articles in periodicals—such as, *ex. gr.*—“*Who is in the testimony?*”†—and cutting off by tests and exclusions (the inventions of zeal

* “Reply to Dr. Titcomb on the Errors of Brethren.” *Pamph.* Chas. Stanley.

† “The Voice,” Vol. xv.

without godliness) saints as devoted and loyal to Christ as themselves, and probably more experienced in the word and doctrine of *truth*, is it not vain to prate about being "*gathered on the ground of the one body*," all the while, *practically*, disproving its *unity*? It were best to amend our ways and doings, before virtually proclaiming—"The temple of the LORD are we" (Jer. vii: 4). Declension has set in among *Brethren*, and it needs not the spirit of a prophet to forecast the end of the *sect*; unless grace is given to judge ourselves *individually* and *unsparingly*. Less of the spirit of the Pharisee—"God I thank Thee that I am not as other men" (Luke xviii: 11); and more of the temper of Daniel—"O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake" (Dan. ix: 17); would "open upon us the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing" (Mal. iii: 10), for "*the Lord, is a God full of compassion and gracious*" (Psalm lxxxvi: 15). This declension had long since been foreseen. "Mr. Wigram had said, that Brethren's testimony was gone; and Mr. Darby was exercised as to leaving us, and going outside, because of the demoralisation that had set in."* While such unseemly outbursts of malevolence and rancour

* "Is it subjection to the Holy Spirit? Or, to a Committee?" Pamph. J. E. Batten.

are caused by mere difference of opinion upon points which, however deeply important of themselves, are not cardinal, one dare not hope for anything better. That the Spirit of God be not grieved, "*bitterness*," and "*wrath*," and "*anger*," and "*clamour*," and "*evil speaking*," must be put away with "*all malice*;" but these unrulinesses are the seeming characteristics of *leaders* among *Brethren*, now-a-days, and the different gatherings catch of the *intemperance*. "There may be a popery associated with the most extreme Protestantism, and nowhere is its dogmatism more offensive, and its intolerance more certain to provoke embittered resistance. Wherever men draw a cordon round their own company as though it were the Church of God, identify their interpretations of the gospel with the gospel itself, attribute a virtual infallibility to their creed, and constitute themselves its infallible interpreter, there is the spirit of popery."*

"Retiring at the commencement of their movement, from ecclesiastical system as delusive, the "*ism*" of Brethren, alas! became as strongly marked as any other sect, and at length displays a Church, so-called, not less intolerant in its formularies! and exclusive than the terrorism of

* "Church Systems in XIX Century." p. 456. J. Guinness Rogers, B.A.

Papacy, or the hierarchical effrontery of Anglicanism and full blown Independency.”*

“What if the Church forget, even among themselves, the offices of mutual forbearance and forgiveness, and rage towards one another with even more bitterness and cruelty than those who care for none of those things? What if the writings of the most religious should be the most vindictive, and the society the most religious should be the society the most full of judgment and accusation? Then were it not a proof that God’s ordinances were changed, that His light was hidden under a bushel, that the salt hath lost its savour, and that the name of God was blasphemed amongst the heathen, because of His people.”†

The *rival leaders* among *Brethren* have led to secession after secession; and, with caustic irony, they have been compared to “rival Popes excommunicating each other with the utmost *sang froid*.” The narratives which have been published of these painful altercations make together a mournful history of fervour *without* wisdom, and faith *without* love. The xiiith. of the First Corinthians seems to have been blotted out of the memories of fervid controversialists. At the cessation of the storm, the weary spirit found its oasis in the rift. *Christ was in the cleft*. That

* “A History and an Argument.” Henry Dunn.

† *Coll. Wri.* J. N. Darby. *Prophetic* Vol. I., p. 31:

precious *unity* which the Spirit alone makes, and no forces can unmake, saddening and sorrowful as *our* failures are, remains unbroken. The *churches* are a ruin. *Brethrenism* is a ruin. All "*isms*" exhibit a common end—*ruin*. One revered in the Lord, and revered for his work's sake, writes—

"Ought the church on earth to be built on the model of a palace, for the residence and honour of the sovereign, where all is to speak of His glory, according to Exodus xxv., "*Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them;*" and Ephesians II., "*Builted together for an habitation of God through the Spirit?*" Or on the model of an *union house*, where all who have a claim on the parish are to be admitted, whatever their characters and conduct may be, if they are not bad enough for the county gaol, *simply because they belong to the parish?* Ought the Church to be "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" according to I. Tim. III: 15? Or a *tower of Babel*, built on the principle of *unity for unity's sake* (the italics are ours), according to Gen. XI: 4, "*Let us build us a city and a tower . . . lest we be scattered abroad,*" even after the confusion of tongues has come in, as a judgment from God? Ought the Church to be *a monument to the glory of Christ*, composed of living stones, the purchase of His blood; shining in the beauties of His holiness, and radiant with the light of His truth? Or a

whited sepulchre, with the bleached bones of a deadly heresy, and the corruption of false doctrine decently buried beneath?"* All this is cheerfully endorsed in its application to *churches* which, after all, are but *human* institutions. Doubtless they are responsible to God for the allowance in their midst of such a deadly heresy as *Newtonianism*, *Annihilation*, or other evil doctrine; but the contention is that the *invisible* Church of God—that which *Christ loved and gave Himself for*—was straightway saved the consequences of the evil Satan sought to beleaguer it with. Sin was instantaneously crushed out in the incipency of its aim; Ananias and Sapphira being witnesses. *Churches* have been tainted with sin, *and are*: and the *Assemblies of Brethren* have been so tainted *and are*. It is, indeed, to be feared that discipline, in any of the so-called *churches*, is becoming, if it has not already become, a by word. Quoting again from same pamphlet—"God is putting our souls to the *test*, and the *touchstone* is Christ—not mere *unity*, not human opinions, but Christ, His own Christ, the Christ of God. I never expect to see the Church on earth brought back to a general *unity*, or even *uniformity*."† The writer in never expecting to see the churches brought back to a

* Thomas Newberry.

† Letter to a friend—"The loose Ground of Gathering." Thos. Newberry.

general unity, *has not missed his mark*; but the *apostolic* churches had lost the *unity* which the *uninspired* churches of Christendom never possessed. It is on these shelves, *Brethren* have made shipwreck of their "*ism*." Professing to be "*gathered on the ground of the one body*," UNITY has been the motto upon their escutcheon, and they have boasted themselves *to be* that *one body*. They have looked down upon christians of other denominations with a feeling of suppressed contempt; and the superciliousness of *exclusivism* has provoked its rebound. As Assemblies *not* giving diligence to *keep* the *unity* they have vaunted, God has put *all sections of them* to the *test* of their profession. Verily, we ought to be abased; and, in confusion of face, acknowledge our *sin* before God. Then on boards, and on broken pieces of the ship we can, despite unworthiness, escape safe to land. But it must be nothing but Christ, and none of the arrogance of self; or nothing more easy than to shunt the failure which has caused righteous resentment.

The Church invisible—"The Lord knoweth them that are His"—composed of saints drawn from the midst of the varied sections of professing Christendom—disciples of *one* Lord—indwelt and sanctified by the *one* Spirit increasing in spiritual vitality with the increase of God—is growing up unto that holy temple in the Lord of the which scripture testifies.

The Church of God triumphant—Christ's body in glory symbolized as a temple, builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit—is the answer of that precious request of the Lord at the close of His ministry: "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me*" "*that they all may be one; as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*" (John xvii: 20, 21). Has any body of Christians on earth ever manifested such a unity with Christ, save the few days of the Church's display at Pentecost? Never! It surely must be admitted that what the Church ought to be, and is not, while sadly proving man's spiritual incapacity to hold the trust, is no barrier to the accomplishment of God's counsel and purposes. "In the present time things viewed morally and spiritually are like things after an earthquake; all is out of order and disjointed. We cannot now turn round and view the Church as a body of heavenly-minded men keeping themselves unspotted from the world, manifesting the presence of Christ by their holy walk, shining as lights in the world's thick darkness. We must each one feel his own individual weakness and failure. The heart is very apt to take counsel of self, and droop under the circumstances around, but instead of being cast down, the question should come in, What is the spring, what the source, of the

sustaining strength on which we lean? It is in *Christ Himself* and in *His* power. If two or three desire now to meet in His name, and to walk unspotted in the midst of evil and failure, it is in the mighty power that never yet failed, and never will, that they can do so.”* This is not the Church; but it is the only correct expression of it. *May God’s dear children give to it the thought so momentous a subject claims!* It is not that the *invisible* Church of God is wanting in illustration of the divine ground that expresses unity. It is rather that the *spiritual* organization of the “*one body*” is saved from the dislocation which *sin* would have effectuated, but that Christ was the Saviour of the body as well as being its Head. It is not to be slightly passed over that in Ephesians v: 23, Christ is so declared to be. He is styled “*Head of the Church,*” and Saviour of the Body. However sadly man defaces the illustration of what the Church should be; happily, it is in safest keeping and will yet be what God designs; The Lord saves that which, *collectively*, is to be lustrous of the brightness and surpassing glory of His person from the power of the taint of human sinfulness even in individuals, as members of the Church on earth into which they are called. The body increases with the increase of God! It is the grand complement of the church whose members

* “Gleanings” from G. V. Wigram, 2nd Series, p. 37. !

"*in the dispensation of the fulness of times are gathered together in one in Christ,*" to the praise of the glory of God. But there is another aspect of the happiness of glorified saints. There is the Father's house. This is special place and privilege as a child with its Father. It is an endeared position with God as a Father by virtue of that precious blood shedding of the only begotten Son of God—"My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God" (John xx: 17)—and which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has made Jesus an object for faith, and the delight of the heart. In the same blessed power, glorified saints will be sustained in the enjoyment of the everlasting fruits of the Cross. "*Because He lives, they also live*" (*ibid.* xiv: 19). It is the thought of being *with* the Lord, and in the light of the Father's countenance, in His house, that, even now, suffuses the heart with the joys of anticipation. The fulness of that presence, and the love of the Father will be to redeemed saints in heavenly glory the morning of joy after the weeping of the night (*vide.* Psalm. xxx: 5).

If the Church of God on earth were visible, and if it were identical with the Body of Christ, its unity would be absolute; and the confusion which exists among saints professing to hold the testimony (?) would be simply impossible. Neither should we witness the *schisms* which, supposing

the body is here, have so dissected the structure that even the fragments could not be put together again to form but a skeleton of what it once was. A body without integuments and muscles is a sorry sight! The epistolary letters of Paul—I. Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians and 2. Timothy—are evidences that the churches, in his day, had departed from the simplicity and beauty of the model, after which he built them; and the addresses to the seven churches in Asia are but additional proofs how thoroughly Judaism was *judaizing* Christianity. The ruin went on; and, in course of centuries, preluded a Reformation which, in its career, became as discordant as its inharmonious prologue. “The vices of the clergy, after the times of Constantine, are acknowledged by all. The bishops had shameful quarrels among themselves respecting the extent of their jurisdiction and boundaries; and, while they trampled on the rights of the people and of the inferior clergy, they vied with the civil governors in luxury, arrogance, and voluptuousness.”*

“As the Christian Church (so *misnamed*) rose in rank, in learning, in wealth, it resigned the native innocence and purity of childhood.”† Speaking of Luther as leader of the Reformation, and of the conference at Marburg, Oct. 1529, on

* Mosheim's Eccle. Hist. Vol. 1. p. 320.

† Dean Waddington. Church Hist. Vol. 1, p. 69.

the subject of "the belief of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist as essential to salvation," and his *excision* of "brethren who differed from him in any point," the same historian writes — "By his imperious tone (Luther's), and elaborate sophistry, he weakened the affections and respect of a large body of intelligent admirers. Many now began to entertain a less exalted opinion of his talents, as well as of his candour. Instead of the self devotion and magnanimity which had thrown such a lustre over his earlier struggles, a vain-glorious arrogance seemed to be master of his spirit; and but for the indulgence of this ignoble passion, the mantle which might have wrapped Germany and Switzerland in one continuous fold, was rent asunder. He was no longer the genius of the Reformation. Descending from that magnificent position, whence he had given light to the whole evangelical community, he was now become little more than the head of a party."* As it has been, so it is. And we may say to Brethren in 1887, as Bucer said to Luther in 1529, "Well, if you refuse to acknowledge as brethren those who differ from you in any point, soon you will not find a single brother in your own ranks." Alas! how bigotry will blind conscience, and impel into acts of intolerance which are simply a scandal to *any* professing body of

* Ibid. Vol 2, p. 401.

Christians. Brethren speak loftily of the "*one table*" and the "*one body*." Yet for years, two famous sections of them, denominated "*Exclusive*" and "*Open*," have been pelting each other with nauseous charges. Equally despotic, and equally ready to dissociate from *their* table all who may refuse acceptance that either is the "*one body*" or "*the bride of the Lamb*," they only differ one from the other in that they are separated. The incidence is exceedingly painful, intensified by their mutual jealousies, dating from 1848. These two parties split up into various camps—each declaring of itself that it is *not* a sect, but is the Church—Christ's body and bride—are respectively opposing and falsifying the very principles either maintains; though to think differently, "*is at the price of being cast out of the synagogue!*"* Be it so; but we must be true to God. Is such hostility of the saints of God against each other an illustration of "*Behold, how good and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity!*"—"How far more deeply true"—said one now at rest—"was it on the church, when the anointing of the Holy Spirit and His full ministration of grace by the word revealing heavenly things enriched and gladdened the unity in Christ which that Spirit formed! Where is it now? Yet it is

* Henry Dunn.

our privilege.”* True: but at what a sacrifice is the privilege possessed! Is Christ the one object precious to faith, recognized beneath the skirts of a resentment as antagonistic to the spiritual interests of either party as hatred can render it? Is ever heard by the zealots of a dogma the voice of sympathy, compassion, and love—“*Why persecutest thou ME?*” Does it illustrate the *unity* which a well formed and compacted body would certainly express? Is there in this querulousness of the members anything that is *bridal-like* in the spirit? If the *corporate* thing—the body—has lost its *unity*, where is to be found its prerogative? Are the churches in their divided aspect on earth the habitation of God through the Spirit? It is one thing to separate *from* evil to manifest separation *to* God, according to the claims of His word upon consciences; but that is wholly different from any pretension of members to be the Church of God upon the ground of having separated from systems, such as churches or chapels. It is indisputable that if the Church is a *visible* body on earth, it is a *wreck* and a *ruin*; and, if so, is *that* the habitation of God? A portion of Israel’s triumphant song was—“*He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation* (Ex. xv: 2); and Solomon declared he had “*built an*

* *Coll. Wri.* “Reflections on the Psalms.” J. N. Darby. *Practical.* Vol. 2. p. 320.

habitation for God" (2. Chron. vi: 2); and "*the glory of the LORD filled the house of God*" (*ibid.* v: 14). But when "*the ancients of the house of Israel did in the dark, every man in the chambers of His imagery, the abominations which provoked God to anger*" (*vide.* Ezek. viii.); "*then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house*" (*ibid.* x: 18). There is a moral application of this history as apposite to the *Nominal Churches* of Christendom as to the *Apostolical Churches* that preceded them. "*Upon this rock I will build my Church,*" said the Lord to Peter; and later on, He promised His disciples *to send the Comforter from the Father, the Spirit of truth, to testify of Him*' (*vide.* John xv: 26). "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,*" that August, unseen Person wrought in testimony to Christ as the builder of His Church (*vide.* Acts ii). Then, by the baptism of the one and the same Spirit, in witness to the power and glory of the resurrection of Christ from among the dead the Church *was* visible. It is, however, not without significance, that no mention is made of the Church as the body of Christ, throughout the Acts. The reason, apparently, is divinely simple. The body is the spiritual consummation of the Church, and will be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. As *hidden* in Christ in God, it is kept untainted from everything that is opposed to the *pristine* simplicity

of Christianity. *Its corporeity* is alone seen of Him who holds it in the secret of His purposes that it may be according to the glory of His counsel. The ruin of the *churches*, including *Brethrenism*, only reveals how man has spoiled everything of God which he has touched. Tried in the balances yet ever found wanting. But "*His thoughts are higher than ours, and His ways than our ways, even as the heavens are higher than the earth*" (Isaiah LV: 8; 9). Truly: "the outward symbol and instrument of *unity* is the partaking of the Lord's Supper."* But the symbol of unity and the absolute existence of unity, in these days, seem to exhibit nothing kindred. To what extent are spirits one who while *outwardly* symbolizing unity are yet *surreptitiously* maligning their brethren? In Christ only is true unity; and only as He draws to Himself by the Spirit will that unity of the Body which is the complement of the Church be consummated. Then He will have a heavenly people associated with Him, and *the unity of the Spirit* will be manifested to the praise of the glory of the grace of God through eternity. It is precious to understand the doctrine of Christ in connection with what the Church as His body is, according to Ephesians I. and II. Though there is not seen in professing Christians that which was visible in the Lord, nevertheless are we

* J. N. Darby.

assured that He is preparing *each* unit for Himself, and bringing every member of His church into visible *conformity* to His own likeness. Then, indeed, will shine the wondrous mystery of "*the* CHRIST." Hearts may well be occupied with a building which when the frame work is removed will exhibit the perfected proportions of an holy temple. The glory of God and the Lamb will shine through the translucency of design and purpose in the counsel of eternity. Such an aggregation of elect ones, according to the foreknowledge of God, will be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. "Not merely has Christ in His mind the time when all glory will centre in Him as Son of God, but as Son of man He is forming *individuals* to be together with Himself in that scene of glory."* As Son of God, Christ has a glory which His saints will behold but *cannot* share. That is the glory of the *personal* Christ. As Son of man, He has a glory His saints *will* share as "*the* Christ;" and that will be the glory of the *mystic* Christ (I. Cor. XII: 12).

"Father of mercies, in Thy Presence bright,
All this shall be unfolded in the light;
Thy children all, with joy Thy counsel know
Fulfilled, patient in hope while here below."†

* G. V. Wigram.

† Spiritual Songs. "*The Hope of Day*." J. N. Darby.

CHAPTER VIII.

PART I.

Interchanging the words "*church*," "*body*," and "*bride*," as though they were equivalents of each other, has so entangled doctrine with dispensation that to discriminate the respective values of commentaries on truth is, *per fas et nefas*, no easy task; unless *uninspired* theories are subordinated to the *inspired* page. "*Prove all things*" is simply to test human opinions by the Word of God, and so, "*hold fast that which is good*" (1. Thess. v: 21). The tradition of inspiration (*vide*. 2. Thess. III: 6) is not to be classed with the convictions and dogmatisms of theologians. While not wanting in esteem of those skilled in divinity, the prerogative of enquiry by the way is indisputable. It were inanity itself, to accept a theory without reference to the fact or facts upon which that theory is propounded. The temerity may be scorned; but, *exegesis* to the contrary, it will brave the scornful. God is Judge, and He sustains against wrongful imputations.

The Bible is the possession of God fearing people, and the wayfaring, "*looking unto Jesus, the*

Author and Finisher of Faith" (Heb. xii: 2), shall not err therein. That precious Volume is God's revelation to man. We care not for the testimonies of Tacitus and Pliny—heathen historians; nor need we those of Ignatius and Polycarp—disciples of John the Apostle. Corroboration of the *effect* and *truth* of Scripture, come from what quarter it may, is well enough; but faith in the inspiration of the Word, if rooted, stands upon an *indefectible* platform. "*CHRIST, the Son of the living God*" is its one central object; and facts whether *doctrinal* or *dispensational* cluster around His sacred Name. As "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God,*" it follows that the "*all*" must be read in the light of all: *i.e.*, a text with its contexts, however remote the comparison—the New with the Old Testament. The distinction between doctrine and dispensation is insufficiently drawn; and, possibly, *dispensation* is least understood. With such a scripture impressed on the heart as 1. Cor. xiv: 1, "*Follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy,*"* there must ever be a due reserve in accepting interpretations of scripture before testing the same *by* scripture.

Upon this principle we prayerfully studied Mr. Brodie's work on Revelation. It differs materially from other schemes of Apocalyptic rendering, and

* Revised V,

is not only the most concise, but is the most lucid. Theorems advanced upon isolated passages of Scripture can only be proved by the ~~tenon~~ ^{key} which turns the mortise—*comparison*. Phenomenal difficulties in the Bible are best fathomed in the *light* of the book itself. There may remain depths deeper than human ken, as God willeth. But only by thoughtfully comparing scripture *with* scripture are the relative positions of relative subjects discerned. *Church* and *Body* are relative to each other; but are *not* synonymous expressions. *Bride*, as a representative term, is neither relative *with* Church *nor* Body.

If the Word says that "*the bride of the Lamb*" is "*the Church*," and that "*the Church*" is "*the body of Christ*" visible on the earth, who would controvert such a statement all the while professing to accept the Bible as a revelation from God? There is not, however, a single verse which asserts that the Church of God *is* the bride of the Lamb; or that the bride of the Lamb *is* the body of Christ. Nor is it taught in Scripture that the Lord has *two* brides. School divinity insists upon as much, but scripture testimony, *per contra*, is higher authority.

The following extract is from the pen of one deservedly respected. "With what an air of triumph—we can picture it—a Sadducee might hold the roll of the law in his hands, and challenge

the Pharisee to point out one passage in which the term resurrection could be found, or in which man's existence after death was affirmed. No such formal teaching on that subject like that in 1. Cor. xv., could be found in any one of the five books of the law; yet the truth of the resurrection of the dead was really to be found imbedded in the Mosaic writings, as the Lord brought out in a way which at once and effectively put the Sadducees to silence. Teaching there was which implied it, though the subject was not one formally treated of by the lawgiver. Similarly, there may be other truths in different parts of the sacred volume really implied, and to be understood, though not formally expressed by name."

. . . "For instance, should we say, Paul never names the Church as the Bride. This, true as to the actual term, the Bride, would be clearly a mistake with Ephesians v. before us."* With the profoundest esteem for the scholarship and piety of the author of the foregoing citation, we think otherwise. The history of Job, as much as we know of it, shews him to have lived in far remote times. Without the least care of the denial by the Sadducees of what they were dim to perceive, it is affirmed that Job had declared "*resurrection*" before Moses had "*im-*

* "Christian Standing and Condition." Pamph. 2nd Edit. p. 3. C. E. Stuart.

bedded" the doctrine in his writings; and not *improbably* before Moses had existence. As a fact, "*we which are alive and remain,*" waiting the coming of the Lord, rejoice in hope of the glorious future consequent upon that incident; and accept with glad heart the *dispensational* truth involved in the conterminous blessing that awaits Israel on the earth. With Job xix: 25—27, impinging on the ear—"I know that my Redeemer liveth," etc.,—the thought is that resurrection, as a *doctrine*, was known among the Jews before David's harp was strung to Psalm xvi., and before the *sect* of the Sadducees was notified.

Isaiah refers to the subject, *dispensationally*; and, with lips touched with a live coal, shouts—*Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead*" (Isa. xxvi: 19). Another Prophet, also, in a "*vision of dry bones*" (Eze. xxxvii: 1—14), gives the dispensational bearing of the subject as one understood. Job's *inspired* declaration was sounded before the typical announcement by "*a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush*" (Ex. iii: 2), proclaimed that "*the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, was not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him*" (Luke xx: 37; 38).

If doctrine is implied in one scripture, the same principle is certain to be unerrably defined in its

parallel somewhere. If so fundamental a truth as "*sealing*" is only incidentally alluded to in Rom. v: 5., as "*the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit*," it is most strictly enforced in 2. Cor. 1: 21; 22., and Eph. 1: 13; 14., and the correspondence with Romans establishes the tenet. And so we find it, whatever be the subject of enquiry in scripture. The New Testament nowhere infers that the body of Christ is the bride of the Lamb. It confirms Old Testament prophecy that the bride is Israel. This bride is not a *virgin* but a *wife* (Rev. xix: 7). The once *divorced* but now *restored* wife enters a *new* covenant as a BRIDE for ever. As the *virgin-daughter* of Israel, she was guilty of "*a very horrible thing*" (Jer. xviii: 13)—"*the whoredoms of Israel*" (Hosea vi: 10). When the Lord came as the Messiah of God to the Jews, He was announced by the Baptist as "*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1: 29). Both doctrine and dispensation are involved in the title. As "*the Bridegroom*" (John iii: 29), He remained with "*the children of the bridechamber*," those who, perceiving His moral glories, followed His blessed person, before the days of "*fasting*" had then come (*vide*. Mark 11: 18—20).

But, "*when His citizens hated Him, and sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us*" (Luke xix: 14), the marriage

was deferred. The veil which is upon Israel's heart "*shall be taken away*" (*vide*. 2. Cor. III: 15; 16); and the "*fasting*" which now is shall be turned into joy. The bidden to "*the bride-chamber*" was the *divorced* wife (Jer. III: 6—13) who would not come but "*made light*" of the invitation (*vide*. Matt. XXII: 3; 5). The "*guests*," called in from the highways "*to the marriage supper of the Lamb*" (Rev. XIX. 7), are the masses outside the covenants of God with Israel; while there is no thought or allusion to "*the mystery of Christ*" (Eph. III: 4)—the Church, into which many *individual* Jews, have been, and are being, brought through faith in Christ Jesus. If the mystery of Israel—"the *natural branches grafted into their own olive tree*"—according to Rom. XI.—were more clearly apprehended, the confusion about "*the bride of the Lamb*" would be at an end. We are instructed that Adam and Eve, and Isaac and Rebekah, are types of the Church. Is it not strange that Scripture does not, even inferentially, teach as much? Noticing the pre-historical characteristics and the *exactitude* of the symbols of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*, figures then present (*vide*. Heb. IX.) of better things awaiting, the question is not irrelevant. Only as head of a race was Adam a type of Christ to come. "*The first man is from the earth, earthy, the second man is from*

heaven”* (1. Cor. xv: 47). The first man’s act was disobedience—rebellion. The second man’s act was obedience to death. “*So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life.*”† (Rom. v: 18). Followers of Adam’s disobedience are the race over which his headship remains. “*Now however there has been manifested apart from law a righteousness of God, receiving witness from the Law and the prophets, namely, a righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all and upon all believers*”‡ (Rom. III: 21; 22). Over this race Christ’s headship is; and believers in Christ Jesus of all sections of the *nominal* churches of the day, at least, own this. The contrast of the races is discerned through the immutable estrangement of obedience from disobedience. “*What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*” (2. Cor. vi: 15). We see after what manner Adam was a type of Christ to come; but how is Eve a type of the Church? “Eve was not the body of Adam, but she was of the body of

* Two-fold New Test. *Trans.* Rev. T. S. Green, M.A. In this, as in R.V., and other high authorities; “*the Lord*,” as found in A.V. and some readings, is omitted.

† R.V.

‡ T. S. Green. *Ubi supr.*

Adam: but the Church is *the* Body of Christ, not *of* the Body of Christ, and so cannot be typified by Eve in this sense. And if Eve were the Church, where do God's people of Israel find a place? They are quite put out of sight. But when the Church which is His body is joined to its Head—Christ, the second Adam—then Eve as the Israel Bride forms a mystical union and all are gathered in one “*both which are in heaven*” (those gone before), “*and which are on earth*” (the millennial saints).^{*} It is “*the dispensation of the fulness of times*” (Eph. 1: 9; 10), when there will be an intercommunion (*vide*. p. 79) between the saints above and the saints on earth. There is no resemblance between Eve and the Church; and, like the regiment of soldiers, critically considered in chapter VII, it fails of analogy. Nor can we see how the Body can be the Bride. Neither do we believe such a relationship is implied in Eph. v: 24—32. Marriage is used there as an appropriate figure of *love* and *union* between Christ and His saints. If there were no union between Christ and Christians *now*, where would the *unity* of the Spirit be found in glory? The Lord nourisheth and cherisheth the Church. He gave Himself for it. As “*members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,*” in that “*He took on Him the seed of Abraham*” (Heb.

* “The Bride of the Lamb.” *Pamph.* p. 6. F. Brodie.

II: 16), the relationship is discerned which He establishes with His saints as "*members in particular*" (I. Cor. XII: 27). As *Son of Abraham*, and *Son of David* (Matt. I: 1), and *Son of man* (Luke III: 38), and the "*appointed Heir of all things*" (Heb. I: 2), His Adamic dominion, according to Psalm VIII., is co-extensive with His rights as Son of God. "*Jesus Christ is Lord of all*" (Acts x: 36). The mystery concerning Christ and the Church, though not disclosed to sight, is discovered to faith as the aggregate of saints, one body corporate in heavenly glory. Their *absolute unity* with Christ the *Head* is the *Body of the glory* which the Spirit consummates, and is *the habitation of God*. And is it not a transcendent mystery? We are often referred to 2. Cor. XI: 2., as testimony that the Church is the Bride—"I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." But the word "*virgin*," both here and in Rev., in nothing signifies that the Church is the bride of the Lamb. It simply relates to chastity of walk and purity of doctrine—continuing in the faith. "*The hundred and forty and four thousand*" (Rev. XIV: 4) having been kept from the carnality of apostacy were undefiled (*vide*. p. 41). Again, *marriage* in Rom. VII: 1—6., in no sense implies that the Church is the bride of the Lamb. The argument is simply to shew that the Jew could not

be *simultaneously* under Law and Grace, and proves the futility of the supposition. Bride and Lamb are Jewish expressions. "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" (John 1: 36) was addressed to the Jews; and Peter writing to believers among the dispersed of Israel, reminds them that they were redeemed from their sins "*with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb*" (*vide*. 1. Peter 1: 18; 19). The doctrinal significance of the title to Jew and Christian, equally, needs not to be insisted upon. Throughout the whole of the millennium, the daily burnt offering unto the LORD of a *lamb* of the first year (Eze. XLVI: 13) will be a retrospective remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross as "*the Lamb of God.*" But, as shewing the precision of scriptural language, whenever the *churches* are addressed, it is under the acknowledgment of "*God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" The *unity* of the Head and Body—Christ and all His gathered saints from the earth—"one Body"—will be the accomplishment of the wondrous revelation committed to the great Apostle; and which, connected with the Lord's coming for His Church, he was honoured to announce as "*his gospel*" (Rom. xvi: 25). The precious doctrine of the "*one body*"—the *corporate* Christ—stands out with distinctness from the dispensational truth of "*the marriage of the Lamb.*" More intimate association—the *unity* of Christ's saints with

Himself—"the perfect *man*, and *measure* of the *stature* and *fulness* of Christ" (Eph. iv: 13)—heart cannot conceive. Filled with the glory of the Lord, the *corporate* Christ reflecting the beauty of the *personal* Christ, will be the everlasting trophy of the preciousness of His blood in having effectuated the counsel and purposes of God, as touching the *destiny* of the Church. Yes: and the happy inheritance of redeemed Israel on the earth, when the WIFE—Israel—shall "*have made herself ready*" (Rev. xix: 7), will be additional witness to the inestimable value of the blood of the sacrificial victim of the Cross of Calvary. When the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies are cast out, and "*the restitution of all things on earth, as God hath spoken*" (*vide*. Acts iii: 21), is accomplished; then, Messiah—"the King"—will rejoice over the new-married people of His love; and "*the Queen in gold of Ophir shall stand at His right hand*" (*vide*. Psalm xlv.) Then, "*the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew*" (Zech. viii: 12); "*instead of the fathers shall be the children,*" and "*the King shall be their Lord,*" and "*they shall worship Him.*" To apply such scriptures, metaphorically, to the Church as the Bride of the Lamb is simply a distortion of truth; and the misconstruction ends in gravest error. To

appropriate to the Church mercies and blessings which belong exclusively to Israel, and are manifestly associated with the approaching future of God's ancient people, is only to confuse what is plain, and to misteach what, *per se*, is simply precious. The Church as the Body of Christ, has its eternal portion *with* Christ in the heavenlies; and the bride of the Lamb in "*clothing of wrought gold*" and "*raiment of needlework*" will have her blessings upon the earth. "*The dispensation of the fulness of times*" (Eph. 1: 10), and the "*restitution of all things*" (Acts 3: 21) will display, concurrently, "*the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*" (Eph. 1: 11).

Much has been written to sustain the assumption that Isaac and Rebekah are types of Christ and the Church. But what of the incident of Abraham making Eliezer swear by the LORD the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that he shall *not* take a wife unto his son of the daughters of the Canaanites? (*vide*. Gen. xxiv: 3). We are taught that Eliezer is "*a picture*" of the Holy Spirit sent by the Father to seek the Church, the Bride—the Lamb's wife! Scripture does not say so; and, we claim to be forgiven, if we insist on this. "*Upon this rock, I will build MY Church,*" is what the Lord said; and after He had *finished* the work which He came to fulfil, sealing it with His blood, He sends the Spirit *from* the Father as

He had promised (John xv: 26), and which promise He re-iterated just prior to His ascension (Acts i: 8). It is the Lord, according to Matthew XIII: 44—46, who sought the Church which is His body, and found it, *selling all that He had to buy it*. Abraham's injunction upon Eliezer that the bride of his son was to be of his *own* kindred and *not* of the Gentile nations, was confirmed by God as a perpetual law for Israel (*vide*. Ex. xxxiv: 12—16. Duet. vii: 1—6. Josh. xxiii: 12; 13. 1. Kings, xi: 1; 2. Ezra ix; x). It were impossible to account for the confusion attaching to the subject—*the marriage of the Lamb*—but for the supposition of commentators that the "*wife*" in Rev. xix., is the Church, the Body, and the Bride! Anything more incongruous, it were difficult to conceive. Both *doctrine* and *dispensation* are seriously menaced by such teaching. Scripture nowhere indicates that the bride of the Lamb is the Church of God, which is the body of Christ. Which is to be credited, the *inspired* Word, or the *uninspired* writings of men?

"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and the WIFE hath *made herself ready*" (Rev. xix: 7). "This is an expression that would be quite incorrect to use towards the Church of God: we *are ready*, and perfected in Him now (Heb. x: 14). We are clean every whit (John XIII: 10), and purged, having no more conscience of sins (Heb.

x: 2; Rom. viii: 1); justified from *all things* (Acts. xiii: 39), and complete in Him (Col. ii: 10). If this be so, have we aught to make ready? When we shall see Him, then our bodies will be fashioned like to His glorious body (1. John, iii: 2; 3), but though this last '*clothing upon*' is to take place as respects our bodies, we know that God *even now* sees us seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. ii. 6), and we have therefore nothing to make ready."* This is according to the doctrine of Scripture; and sound doctrine it is. But of which of the *nominal* churches of the day, including *Brethren*—so-called—could as much be said of them as *visible* institutions? There are individuals in *all* the sections of professing Christians who—"holding the Head"—seeking to live *practically* the truths they so greatly enjoy *doctrinally*. Conscious of their own natural infirmities, and having *no* confidence in themselves, remembering that "*the flesh is weak*," in separation before God from the evil courses of Christendom, they *press towards the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus*." (Phil. iii: 14). Of such the Church of God is composed; and from the very circumstances attending its spiritual aggregation and growth, it is *invisible* in the midst of the churches, though seen and known of God "*even now*."

* "The Bride of the Lamb." *Pamph.* p. 8. Fredk. Brodie.

"Alas! the very word "Church" is weighted with reproach. It no longer describes "the faithful in Christ Jesus." If the possibilities of language allowed, it would be well to use the word no longer in such a sense. Of old it was "*the Camp of Israel*," and "*the mixed multitude*." With us the mixed multitude and the Church are one. Should a martyr spirit of the first ages revisit the earth he would see much to fill him with a strange astonishment. Instead of the mutual love among believers that once filled a pagan and selfish multitude with wonder, he would witness gulphs of chilling and even hostile alienation among Christians, and which sections among them were seeking to deepen and widen."* Our old friend is within the ranges; and he traces with but too faithful a pen the condition of the *churches*. It may be asked—"Which among them is *the Church* that Christ builds?" Even "*Brethren*" boasting of *unity*, are the most contentious of the *sections* of Christians! If they do not "witness all the teaching and exhortation confined to *one official head*," they have learned to discover that a *ministerial* autocracy has crept into their midst coupled with an element which seeks to dragoon intelligences with *martial* imperiousness. *Military* arrogance and quasi *judicial* ostentation prevail in

* From contribution—"The end of the Year"—to "The Christian." Dec. 30, '86. Rev. W. Guest.

their circle; and lacking the spirit of Christ, the swords and staves of invective are handled as *customary* weapons of spiritual warfare. Each party proscribes the other, as if it were an act of chivalry to "*cut off*," and "*cast out*" any who differ from their interpretation of God's Word. To dissent from such conceits is *heresy*. Thus the poison of the Upas is extracted. It is surely time to discern the beam in our own eye; since "*our pretensions are not borne out by facts*," and our "*fierce internal controversies*" belie the brother-hood! The cause of failure, and the lapse of fellowship in so many assemblies of Brethren of *all* shades is traceable to a spirit of jealousy and egotism in the leaders. Since the division of 1848, *ecclesiastical* assumption, with an octuple grasp of superiority of position, and a supercilious contempt of christians *outside* their own pale, has been compressing characteristics of original simplicity into a nutshell if, indeed, *simplicity* was not a feint. Not a few haughty and petted Evangelists among them with more maleficence than spirituality have contributed to recent disruptions in America and at home, by *calumnies* that have shocked the godly in the *churches*, and made the rent in their own *sect* wider. In possession of folios of pamphlets (alas! too *plentiful*), professedly published "*for private circulation only*," and MS. letters of recriminatory

bitterness, it were not difficult to write the history of the declension of Brethrenism, only that the task were more painful than profitable. If rancour and pharisaism have marked the sect of *Exclusive* Brethren; hostility and severity have characterized the "*Bethesda*" sect—their rival charges being witnesses. Each has rejoiced to magnify the failures of the other, and so provoke to wrath. If "*Exclusivism*" has proved too sectarian, because of its intolerance, to hold all believers within its fences without question of the charitableness of its "*pious hate*;" on the *contra* side, "*Open-brethrenism*" has caught the infection of the *dogmatism* of spiritual primacy. Malice leavens the whole lump of the "*isms*" of what once was, truly, a fraternity.

There is a Scripture—(James III : 5 ; 10) which, in fact, is too much overlooked. Hence the cleavage amongst Christians is something more than sad. It proves that neither the Brethren nor any of the denominations can claim *to hold the testimony*. "Where Christ is there are Christendom and Christians."* Ah; it is just the difference between the christianity of the *World* and the christianity of the WORD—the christianity of a *Sect* and the christianity of CHRIST. But where *intolerance* is rampant, and *primacy* holds supreme authority, let the

* Dr. Whyte. Edin.

doctrine of any church, *so-called*, be as sound as, proverbially, steel is said to be true, *the spirit is Christ-less*. The Spirit is the link between the Christian and Christ. How precious to realize it, in spite of the animosities which divide God's children. "Christ cannot fail in His faithfulness to His body; but the testimony committed to the assembly [church] is no longer so rendered as to make it felt that God is on the earth."* The testimony committed to the Church at its rise at Jerusalem was soon lost; but that does not lessen the responsibility of *individual* witness for God in the *churches*.

Much is said of the *heavenly church* as a thing apparent; but where to discriminate such in the labyrinth of Christendom is an insolvable difficulty. Scripture speaks of the *body of Christ*, but not of a *heavenly Church*. One may as well pursue a phantom, as hope to find that *visible* which is *invisible*. Be that as it may, some authorities declare this "*heavenly church*" to be the Lamb's wife: thus;—"We are not left with a vague rumour of praise and gladness, not knowing from whom exactly it comes. There appear the twenty-four elders who had understanding of the mind of Christ, and the four living creatures, that had been from the beginning associated with the

* "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible." Vol. iv. p. 266. *Revised Edit.* J. N. Darby.

providential judgments of God, or at least a part of them. These "*fell down and worshipped God that sat upon the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah*" (Rev. xix: 4). It is not Christ, who has taken His place upon His own throne yet, but they worship God that sat on the throne."

"The consummation of the bride's blessing is come. It is important to observe that this is not the moment when the Lord comes for the heavenly church. It is a scene in heaven, not the Lord Jesus meeting His saints in the air. A few verses lower down we do get heaven opened, and Christ comes out of it, and the saints follow Him. Nothing, therefore, can be more simple or certain than the inference that the saints were already there. They must have been in heaven before, in order to follow Christ thence when He comes to judge. Now, I ask, how did they get there? They are not said to be now taken up to the Father's house. We have the old familiar parties in heaven. But we have a new fact: the bride is married in heaven—the one for whom Christ reserves the brightest grace and glory—she gets ready; and now is announced, not merely the song of triumph, because of the judgment of evil, but "the marriage of the Lamb."

"The purpose of the Revelation is not to shew us the Father's house, nor its inner scenes. God is never even called our Father in this book, because

it opens out, not the intimacy of His love to us, but rather the righteous ways of God—the establishment of the kingdom and the end, when He is all in all. True, there must be the stern unsparing judgment of all this evil, and this we have had. But when God's part comes, and the full blessedness of the church, there is but an announcement of it—the bride has made herself ready. It is left there comparatively hidden. We are told of the invitations to it, as it is said in *v. 9*: “*Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.*” . . . “Is it too much to suppose that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is a different symbol, that is, represents a class of saints different from these blessed ones who are invited to her marriage? Who is it that God means by these two distinct symbols? As to the bride, the Lamb's wife, few would have the least difficulty. Almost every one sees in her the church—the one that is constantly presented in the New Testament scripture as the heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

This is dogmatical enough; but nowhere do we read in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ has a *heavenly* bride and an *earthly* bride too. The assertion is directly opposite to His own most precious teaching. As to “the consummation of

* “Lects. on the book of Rev.” Chap. xix. p. 391, *et seq.* W. Kelly.

the bride's blessing being come:" that, surely, is no proof that the bride *is* the Church; and with respect to the inference that the saints who follow Christ were already in heaven, without attempting to controvert anything "*more simple or certain,*" Matt. xxvii: 50—53 tells us how they got there, and that they form a portion of the "*blessed and holy in the first resurrection*" (Rev. xx: 6). The resurrection of the Church is at the instant of its rapture. The "*first resurrection,*" though it may be divided as to times of occurrence, includes Old and New Testament saints upon whom "*the second death hath no power.*" Neither in the announcement—"Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb," is there a scintilla of evidence that the Church in heavenly glory, separate and distinct from "*the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Heb. xii: 23) is "*the bride of the Lamb.*" It is blessedly true, "we are not left with a vague rumour of praise and gladness not knowing from whom exactly it comes" (*vide*. p. 226); and, taking God's word for one's guide, *never shall be*. In I. Chronicles xxiv: xxv., we have 24 courses of priests; 24 courses of Levites in attendance; and 24 courses of singers! The *twenty four* Elders in Revelation are symbolical of Old Testament saints in heaven. They are invested with spiritual wisdom and intelligence. Their priestly completeness accords with the scope

and purport of Old Testament History and Prophecy. The "*living creatures*" of Revelation and Ezekiel are characteristic of the office of the seraphims (Isaiah. vi: 2; 3) and cherubims (Ex. xxv: 18—22), and are representative of the majesty of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The idea that the bride of the Lamb is the body of Christ is purely imaginative. To affirm that either "*the Elders*," or "*the four living creatures*" represent the Church is absolutely misleading. Where is the proof? There is positive discrepancy in such teaching. If the Church of God is "constantly presented in the New Testament as the heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ," it is earnestly enquired—*Where?* Distinctly, it is not in Eph. v., nor in 2. Cor. xi., nor in Rom. vii., unless by a perversion of metaphor. That the Body of Christ will be in glory when the scene in Rev. xix., is enacted is as certain as that scripture is true. If "God is never called our Father in this book," and *He is not*—to whom is the prophecy addressed? Clearly to those whose past and future is bound up in it—the *Jews*. This does not lessen the incumbency on every child of God to come under the promised blessing of reading this prophecy. More than *four fifths* of the Bible pertain to the Jews; but the godly Christian can make moral application of the contents of numberless portions to *self*,

thanking God, intensely, for such an incomparable digest of cosmogony, history, law, covenant, blessing, grace, light, and perfection. It is after the accomplishment of the Cross, and what follows of the precious truth concerning the Church of God, that the Christian finds the fullest, the richest, the most glorious possession of all. The fact that "*according to God's eternal purpose, purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, is made known to the Church His manifold wisdom (vide. Eph. III: 10; 11), succinctly certifies the characteristics of the unity of the Body of the glory—"Christ in His Saints, and the Father in Him, that they may be made perfect in one."* Capacitated by the glory which the LORD has given them (*vide. John xvii: 22—24*), they will behold the *untransferable* glory of His God-head.

CHAPTER VIII.

PART II.

"*The marriage of the Lamb*" is dispensational. According to Scripture, the ceremonial of it is on the earth. Old Testament prophecy is full of the subject. The Revelation of John verifies the predictions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea, even

as it amplifies the structural force of the wondrous book of Ezekiel. Based upon the transcendent work of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the *marriage* encircles doctrine of peerless value. The doxology of saints in glory—the Body—and saints on earth—the bride of the Lamb [*Israel*]—will be sung concurrently, whether in relation to things in the heavenlies or of the restitution of things below. The ascription of praise from either will be “*Unto Him that loveth us, and freed us from our sins by His own blood*” (Rev. 1: 5). The mention of the Bride in Revelation is confirmatory of the great prophecies of the Old Testament. The assumption that the Church is the *wife*, and that the marriage of the Lamb to this *wife* takes place in heaven, lacks the authority of Scripture. It is not the *position* of the Church; and surely it is important to distinguish between Scripture and speculation. The book of Revelation presents Israel as its subject. The addresses to the seven churches in Asia are a ratification of its Jewish proclivities. That they symbolize, *secondarily*, the ruin and confusion of the religious “isms” of professing Christendom—the human systems of the day—is quite admissible with the understanding of the *scope* of these addresses. But that their *primary* application is to the *Church* which is *hid* with Christ in God is, upon the face of it, a contradiction. What of Thyatira? What of

Laodicea? To refine argument in support of a theory Scripture does not sustain, is very questionable teaching. Can Thyatira or Laodicea be representative of the present state of the Church of God? *Impossible!* These addresses, *dispensationally* considered, refer to a yet future; but have, nevertheless, a direct *moral* bearing on the *present* condition of the sections of *Brethren* as upon *all* the *nominal* Churches of Christendom—Greek, Romish, and Protestant. The Lord in answer to the question—“*Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*”—replied, “*Can the children of the Bride-chamber mourn (i.e., those who had received Him) as long as the Bridegroom is with them?*” The mystic marriage-feast of Cana is unmistakeably characteristic. “For the ‘third day’ (John 11: 1), which is the same as the resurrection day, the marriage and the wine of the Lord’s own providing, are things which stand allied with the *kingdom*, in the thoughts of those who are familiar with Scripture. And thus, this marriage sets forth the coming kingdom of the Lord, where He is to appear both as king and bridegroom.”* Emphatically, the Church is not alluded to in this beginning of the miracles of Jesus, and manifestation of His glory. When the Lord returns, the good wine

* “On the Gospel by St. John.” Chap. 11: 1—12. p. 21. J. G. Bellett.

will be for Israel. Now, while He is taken from His affianced, is the time of their "*fasting*" (*vide*. Matt. ix: 14; 15). In Matt. xxv., the virgins go out to *meet* the Bridegroom. Neither, then, can this be a symbol of the Church of God. Christ *comes* for the Church; and, moreover *its* rapture precedes *His* epiphany. The wedding according to *ver.* 10, same chapter, takes place on the earth; and is *subsequent* to the great tribulation (Matt. xxiv: 29), when "*the one*"—the wicked—"shall be taken," and "*the other*"—the just "*shall be left*" (*ibid.* v. 40) for the millennial kingdom (*vide*. Rev. vii: 9). The Lord "*returning from the wedding*" (Luke xii: 36), and His "*going into the marriage*" Matt. xxv: 1), are easy of explanation. But not only so, the two scriptures elucidate the fact that Israel is the bride of the Lamb, and that the Church is *not*. The Revelation is a book of symbols. It is only to be interpreted according to symbolical rendering. "*Bride*" is as truly a symbol as any other word used emblematically. The historic thought of the "*virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth*" (Joel. i: 8), is the clue to the *restored* wife—"backsliding Israel," and "*her treacherous sister Judah*"—that "*hath made herself ready.*" If a careful comparison of Jer. iii., and Rev. xix: 1—9, with Luke xii: 32—37., and Matt. xxv: 10 be given, all seems symmetrical and exact in

signification. The passages in Luke and Matthew are unmistakeably of Jewish intention, and relate to the manifestation of the Lord. Those who came out of their graves (Matt. xxvii: 53), after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from among the dead, could only have been Old Testament saints who had passed through death. As the stronger, overcoming the strong man armed (*vide*. Luke xi: 22), the Lord, "*when He ascended, led captivity captive.*" His blood having been shed "*for the remission of sins that were past*" (Rom. iii: 25), as well as for *sins* then present and prospective, God having foreseen for His people some better things that "*those all, having obtained a good report through faith,*" without *these* should not be made perfect (*vide*. Heb. xi: 40). These Jewish saints form a portion of the bride in the heavenlies, and come down with the Lord. Zech. xiv: 5, establishes plainly that these saints are *not* the Church. The restored wife "*made ready,*" and "*clothed with the garments of salvation,*" enters the *new* covenant state; and, with the joys befitting the auspicious opening of the millennium of righteousness, "*remembers no more the reproach of her widowhood, for her Maker is her husband*" (*vide*. Isaiah liv: 4). Then will the cry—"the Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Rev. xxii: 17)—be the chorus of joy; and "*He that shall come will come*" (Heb. x: 37). But the Church's portion

is transcendently richer, grander, and loftier according to "*the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God*") Eph. III: 9; 10). It should never be forgotten that God is jealous for His own name, and that it is the privilege of the Church of God to give Him praise as the God of Israel. True; as touching the Church, *collective testimony is gone*, but the *individual* witness of every *unit* of the Church remains. It is a solemn obligation, then, on *each* child of God pertaining to the various *sects* of Christians to compare spiritual things *with* spiritual, so as to mark the inestimable riches of the Church's calling *in* Christ, as well as to discern the special blessings which await God's people on earth as "*the bride of the Lamb*." Christians are *the children of God* by faith of Christ. But *the people of God* in Scripture phraseology, always mean—Israel—the Jews. Therefore, "if we do not give God glory as the God of Israel, we are surely in danger of that snare from which the chosen expounder of His dispensational wisdom so earnestly endeavoured to preserve the Church" (Rom. XI: 25).^{*} Scripture clearly teaches that the Bride will be God's ancient people, Israel,

^{*} "Notes on the Psalms." p. 581. Arthur Pridham.

on the earth ; and that the body composed of heavenly saints, believers, both Jews and Gentiles, will be united to Christ—through “*one faith*” by “*one Spirit*.” Isaiah prophecies (LIV: 4.) that Israel “*shall not be ashamed ; nor confounded ; nor put to shame : but shall forget the shame of her youth.*”

And, then, from vers. 5—8, is a lovely prediction of that which Rev. XIX: 7, seals as fulfilled. So, again, Hosea II: 15; 17, declares that, when the names of Baalim shall be taken out of the mouth of Israel, she shall sing as in the days of her youth, for the Lord will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope ; and she shall call the Lord “*Ishi ;*” i.e., “*my husband.*” The law denounced a multiplication of wives (Deut. XVII: 17) ; and the Spirit of God in I. Tim. III: 2; 12, endorses the same polity under the christian dispensation. Jer. III: 8; 14, as plainly affirms that the Lord has *married* and has *divorced* Israel (*vide*. Mark X: 5), as Hosea II: 16, clearly foretells that this *divorced* wife shall be *restored* to favour as betrothed unto Him for ever, “in righteousness, and in judgment, in loving kindness, and in mercies” (*ibid. ver*: 19). In Gal. IV: 26, we read that “*Jerusalem, which is above, is the Mother of us:*” i.e., Jews as well as Christians begotten by the gospel. “*Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker*

is God (Heb. xi: 10). This holy city—"Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God," and "having the glory of God"—is, in Rev. xxi: 9—11, described, symbolically, as "*the Bride, the Lamb's wife.*" Israel no longer the *divorced* but the *restored* wife betakes herself to the blessings and privileges of the *new* covenant. The predicted change of heart is come, and enables millennial Israel to sing tidings of great joy to all the people; and—with emphasis—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will in men." To make application to "the *Body of Christ*" of a scene so essentially Jewish in its imagery and accordance with prophecy is a serious mistake. *Bias*, however, enshrining itself under cover of spiritual *intellectuality*, scornfully repudiates views not in harmony with a hard and fast line of interpretation. There is, possibly, a little *dilettantism* even in obstinacy. Nevertheless, scripture read in the light of scripture outweighs human theories which, to be *authoritative*, must be something more than *suppositive*, however intellectual the supposition.

It is the insistence that the first eight verses of Rev. xxi. correspond with the *eternal* state which has made the confusion of some commentaries worse confounded. The whole weight of the argument of these verses is the reverse of the theory. "What takes place during eternity, and what ordering of things the rule of the Everlasting

Father may introduce, is not revealed. The only reference to eternity is to be seen in 1. Cor. xv : 24., when all rule, authority, and power (to enforce it), will come to an end with the existence of evil—that which ever rebels against authority and becomes lawlessness. This is all judged for ever, and then LOVE reigns.” “It is remarkable that in this chapter which is perhaps the most symbolic in Revelation, well known writers have been so utterly inconsistent as to try and explain the first verse in its simple literal sense. The symbol of the sea has been used twice before in this book as representing the anarchy and tumultuous confusion of men, and in referring back to Gen. 1 : 2., a similar thought is presented to us, that chaos prevailed, when only the waters were seen before creation began. So in Jer. LI : 42., where the desolation of Babylon is described, and from the context it is at once seen that it is used in symbol. “*The sea is come up upon Babylon, she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof, her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness.*” This was the method of her destruction in symbol; but we know the literal sea never overflowed Babylon. So here is the promise that there shall be no more confusion, and anarchy of peoples, as there has been in these times, and in those especially of the Tribulation but the new heavens and earth, which now

supervenes, or *the governmental reign of Christ in righteousness*, will be in perfect order, and free from all confusion of man's governments."* Symbols are not without their difficulty of interpretation; but, as has been judiciously observed, "we must know how to set aside the thoughts of the creatures themselves, so as only to see the ideas."† If symbolic language is taken *literally* it can only lead to endless confusion. It is in this way that doctrine and dispensation have been so intercalated with each other as to render the book of Revelation even more than inextricable. To accept the supposition that "*the Bride*" means "*the future glory of the Church*" is to ignore what Scripture teaches of the blessings which await the *elect* earthly people of God. Besides, the words—*bride*, and *wife*, are never applied in Holy Writ to the Church; and, in John III: 29, the expression "*bride*" is so significantly employed as to place the subject beyond controversy, *unless for controversy's sake*, and that is often more discreditable than sound. Nowhere do we read in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ *betroths* the Church unto Himself, but we know that *the church of God* which is the body of Christ, *i.e.*, all the saints, called from

* "The Revelation viewed by the light of Old Testament Scriptures." p. 193. *et seq.* F. Brodie, F.R.A.S.

† "Apocalyptic Symbols." *Pamph.*

above, and from among *all* the churches will come "in the *unity* of the faith, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a *perfect man*, unto the *measure* of the *stature* of the *fulness* of the Christ" (Eph. iv: 13). The *unity*, the *knowledge*, the *perfection*, the *measure*, the *stature*, all pertain to the *oneness* of the *man* in glory—the *mystic* Christ. Now, surely, *the bride* is not this *perfect man*! *Bride*, in scripture signification, as a symbolical expression, corresponds with the metaphorical utterances of the prophecies and several of the Psalms concerning Israel. But the phrase—"the *body of Christ*," is never used as an emblem, sign, or figure; and is not suggestive of any other object than what in itself it really is. A careful comparison of Rev. xix; 7., with Isaiah liv., establishes, indicatively, the sense of the passage—"His wife hath made herself ready." To suppose that "the twelve tribes of Israel, constituting one nation, symbolize the diversity *with* unity of the Church of God,"* is so to strain symbol that it loses all the force and power characteristic of emblematic teaching. It would be wiser to infer, comparing "*diversity*" with "*unity*," that the *lack* of unity in the twelve tribes of Israel, and their fierce enmity against each other as occasion called forth their revenges, was symbolical of what would prove the disrupted state of the *churches* of

* Thomas Newberry.

Christendom, and of Brethren *in particular!* In Rom. xii: 4; 5., and 1. Cor. xii: 12., the *natural* body is employed as a symbol of the *Body of the Glory*—"the Christ." Verses 21; 22., of Rev. xxi., in loftier emblems than yet exercised, display the city of *the absolute glory of God*, as distinguished from the descending city "*having the glory of God;*" *i.e.*, the radiations of the highest glory. The mountain in *ver.* 10., "*great and high;*" or, "*high and lofty;*" or, "*exceedingly high,*" was the exalted platform of privilege and authority to which "*one of the seven angels,*" who "*talked*" with John, "*carried him in the Spirit.*" From this standpoint, the seer could look into the city of the glory even as he could gaze upon the descending city which "*had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine on it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*" The Lamb is God's *centre* for heaven and the universe. The doctrinal significance of the title corresponds with the unspeakable value of what the patriarch Abraham "*saw*" of the day of Christ, "*and was glad*" (John viii: 56). His soul was captivated with the powerful outlines of a distant future; and because his affections were set aright upon God's things, the Spirit illumined the assurance of his faith, ages in advance of the dispensation in which he lived. The structure of the verses now immediately under consideration

signifies what was *first* in counsel—the splendour of the mystery of “*the Christ.*” “*If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God*” (growing unto an “*holy temple*” in the Lord) “*not made with hands eternal in the heavens*” (Compare 2. Cor. v: 1, with Eph. ii: 21). According to the opinion of Mr. Newberry, “A city is a large collection of houses, and as the many members of Christ form one body,” *it is asked*, “what more appropriate emblem of the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, can we conceive?”* The exception taken to this teaching is that neither the church nor the body in Scripture is once compared to a city. Again, a city more directly conveys the thought, in a *significant* sense, of intelligence, spirit, and power, rather than the aggregate of its population or than the number of its houses. Intelligence is the *idea* of the symbol. And, of this higher symbolical city though the Apostle might look into it, he could define *nothing* unless it was that which *distinguished* it from “*the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God; viz.: its twelve gates; every several gate of one pearl; and its street of pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*” “*Twelve* presents to our enraptured vision the ultimate triumph and eternal enthronement of all that is holy and good, when evil shall go out in darkness, and nothing shall

* Englishman’s Bible. Supplement, p. 109.

ever more dim the lustre of the jewelled diadem which circles the brow of the Eternal King.”* (Comp. 1. Tim. vi: 14—16). In the city of the absolute glory of God there is no temple, “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

The Body of Christ in glory, in an *emphatic* sense, will dwell intransitively in the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb; and, as has been remarked (*vide*. p. 24), as God’s “*holy temple in the Lord*” (Eph. ii: 21), He will dwell transitively in that which delights His eye as the expression of the fulness of the purpose of His eternal counsel in Him who was “*brought forth, while as yet God had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world*” (Prov. viii: 26). The aspect of “the Body” is intensively spiritual.

Of “*the glory which the Lord had with the Father before the world was*” (John xvii: 5), God and the Lamb could alone be the temple. The unity of the Spirit—the corporate Christ, the complement of the Church which the Lord has been building ever since the day of Pentecost—is symbolized by “*the several gates of one pearl*.” This one pearl of great price (Matt. xiii: 46) according to the Lord’s estimate of its beauty, is more precious than rubies, *excelling all things in comparison with it*.

* “*Typical Numbers*.” The closing days of Christendom, p. 427. Wale.

"When the Lord comes to be *glorified in His saints*, and to be *admired in all them that believe in that day*" (2. Thess. 1: 10), He will *spread His tabernacle—His body of glory—over the sealed of Israel and the saved of the Gentiles. His saints [His body] reigning in life by Him* (Rom. v: 17) *will reign with Him* (2. Tim. 11; 12), and *then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (*vide.* p. 80); and "*the sanctuary of the Lord will be in the midst of Israel for ever*" (Eze. xxxvii: 28). This, indeed, will be the glory of God filling the heavens and the earth, "*according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" Eph. 11: 11).

The holy city, Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from God, has *twelve gates*, and at the gates *twelve angels*, and names written thereon, which are the names of the *twelve tribes* of the sons of God. And the wall of the city has *twelve foundations*, and on them the *twelve names* of the *twelve apostles* of the Lamb. "*Twelve*" is also the governmental number, symbolizing "*God in government.*" This city, which is "*the bride, the Lamb's wife,*" will be the executive of all authority and blessing over the earth throughout the Millennium. As filled with the glory of the translucent "*city of pure gold as it were transparent glass,*" the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings and the nations of the earth shall bring their glory unto

(*eis*) it." The distinction of the city of "*pure gold like unto clear glass*" is strikingly defined from "*that great city, the holy Jerusalem,*" having a wall great and high to distinguish its inhabitants from the saved nations of the world, and to mark them off as a *separate* people before God. The city which does *not* come down out of heaven, and which the Apostle saw into from the height of the great mountain, *after* that *the holy city* specifically styled the Lamb's wife *had* descended towards the earth, transcends all thought however suggested by symbol the most exquisite. Discerning the *city of the glory* of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple, from the *heavenly city* which descends to the earth, is of the utmost moment. How exact the correspondence, Eze. XLVIII: 35, with Rev. XXI: 3—"The LORD is there;" and, "*Behold the tabernacle of GOD is with men.*" It is the fulfilment of the prophecy of His "*new covenant*" with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant they brake, although he was a "*husband*" unto them (*vide*. Jer. XXXI: 31; 32). The words in same chapter, v. 33, are *identical* with those in Rev. XXI: 3; *viz.*, that "*God will be their God, and Israel shall be His people.*" The *first* covenant made with Israel is brought into remarkable contrast with the *new* covenant.

The first covenant (Ex. XIX: 3—8) was the

basis of the first tabernacle (*ibid.* xxix: 43) in which God promised to “*dwell among the children of Israel*” (v. 45). That covenant waxing old is succeeded by “*the true tabernacle*” on the basis of the *new* covenant. Jesus—“*the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*”—as Christ Jesus—is the Mediator of this *new* covenant. Hence the sprinkling of His blood “*speaketh better than Abel.*”^{*} It is His priestly function. The Davidical covenant of promise which is wholly *Messianic* is one thing; and “*the sure mercies of David*” (Isaiah lv: 3) made sure by the resurrection of Christ from among the dead (Psalm xvi: 10) quite another. That which is the everlasting basis of the promised blessing to Israel—the blood of Jesus Christ—is, moreover, the cleansing power which purges the conscience of every member of the Church *invisible* on earth to serve the living God (*vide.* Heb. ix: 14). The members of that Church know the preciousness of the *testament* through the death of the testator, and their own heavenly legacy *under* that testament. “*To this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living*” (Rom. xiv: 9). The title of Israel to the *new* covenant, spite their unbelief, is unrevoked; but which immediately preceding the millennium, and continuing throughout its days, will prove the key-

* Margin. R.V.

note of their ascriptive praise to Him who will have fulfilled all "*which was spoken by the prophets*" (Matt. 11: 23). The Church of God stands upon transcendently higher ground than *covenant* relationship. As the Body of Christ in glory, *perfected* and *indivisible*, its members on the earth had been "*chosen*" of God in Christ "*before the foundation of the world*"—"the Christ" (1. Cor. XII: 12). As connected with the Church *invisible*, their lives had been *hid* with Christ in God; and, "*in the fulness of the times*," irrespective of *sect* or *denomination*, they "*all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ*" (Eph. IV: 13). One discerns the accordance with the Lord's gracious request in His sublime prayer (John XVII: 21), that they *all* may be one in God and in Him. It is in accordance with the power, and the eternity of the reign of the dispensation of LOVE. In the city of the glory of God where there is *no* temple, because God and the Lamb are the temple of the *absolute* glory; the Body in *unity* with the Head—"far above all *principality, and power, and might, and dominion, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*"—is the true ECCLESIA, "*the habitation of God through the Spirit.*" It has been said that "*Christianity lies in ruins.*"* This is not true of

* Elihu Rich.

the Christianity of the Word and of Christ. That is indestructible. The Christianity of Christendom is, undoubtedly, in hopeless ruin; since its life has long been the escheat of Satan. The line from the Apostles has been *nowhere* preserved. With John's death, the Apostolate came to an end. The endeavour, therefore, to set up anything approximating to an *Apostolic Church*, through not having the mainspring to keep its spirituality in life and activity, has only ended in the dismemberment of the *nominal* churches of the day; and Brethren as a *sect* or *sects* share the common fate. The *clericalism* and *ecclesiasticism* they separated from, and denounced as error, are the peculiar forces that are now dividing and re-dividing them into hostile sections. This state of things is directly at variance with their insistence of "*one body, and one Spirit.*" Then what of the absoluteness of the *truth* taught? Why, "there is *one Body*," but it is *spiritual*; even as its prelude—"the Church"—is *invisible*. In conclusion, then, we have sought to note what distinguishes between "*the Church*," and the *Apostolic* churches, and the *nominal* churches of Christendom: and to prove that the "*Body*" is the complement of "*the Church*" in Glory; and that "*the Bride of the Lamb*," either doctrinally or dispensationally considered, is *ISRAEL*. May the Lord give each of

His saints to seek the things which are *His*, always remembering—" *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*" (2. Cor. III: 17). And " *unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and for ever. AMEN.*"



DATE DUE

[illegible]

DEMCO 38-297

15 82. 14 5
58 76 196
122 193

262

E68

34905

Erith, F.N.

The Church, the Body, the Bride

262 E68

Erith, F. N.

The church, as distinguished f

c.1

000

040101



3 9304 00068736 9

ASSOCIATED MENNONITE BIBLICAL SEMINARY

